

# AFRICANUS JOURNAL

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## Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an academic, multilingual journal. Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, based on the Boston campus (the Center for Urban Ministerial Education [CUME]).
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way).

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who are in a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D. program or have a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D., Ed.D., or equivalent degree.

Current publications authored by professors and students of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus (Center for Urban Ministerial Education) are featured interspersed throughout the journal.

<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/boston/africanusjournal>

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## Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around A.D. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around A.D. 231–233. In A.D. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (ANF 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pingéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

## Other Front Matter

### *Editorial team*

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### *Summary of Content*

This issue highlights literary concerns as they relate to the Bible and society and to intercultural communication. It also contains numerous book reviews.



*“I am eternally grateful to the Africanus Guild, which has helped me fulfill God’s call and realize a personal dream. I could not be working on my PhD in Old Testament without the financial help, prayers, and educational support I receive through the Guild.”*

—QUONEKUIA DAY

# Mentoring Scholars in a New Millennium

## THE JULIUS AFRICANUS GUILD

was created at the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with the purpose of identifying and nurturing evangelical minority doctoral students with the potential to impact the global Body of Christ significantly through their scholarship.

The Guild exists as a Ph.D. research support and mentoring program in collaboration with schools such as London School of Theology in England. The context of the Guild is urban and multicultural with an emphasis on developing scholars who can address difficult issues facing the church today with a commitment to the inerrancy of Scriptures and the contextual application of the principles found therein.

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## Earning the Right to Be Published

LES STOBBE

Ever since God created Adam and Eve, our task as God's followers has been to express the creative calling He gave them. Yet, if we create and no one knows about it, we may have a wonderful sculpture, painting, article or book (even web site) and still not be His messenger. The message encapsulated in what we have created has to get to at least one other person for us to fulfill God's calling. For writers, I call that "Earning the Right to Be Published," for publishing is one of God's ways of passing on His creative message.

So what earned Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye the right to be published in the Left Behind series, with more than 60 million Left Behind adult and teen books sold? Consumers bought more copies of *Desecration*, the ninth book in the series in three months than any novel, secular or religious, in the first year. By the summer of 2001, more than 5,000 people had sent letters to the publisher and authors saying they had accepted Christ after reading one of the books.

And what earned Bruce Wilkinson and Dave Kopp the right to be published as *The Prayer of Jabez*? That book sold more copies the first year of publication than any non-fiction book ever in the known history of publishing—three million more copies than the nearest candidate, the book by Oprah Winfrey's cook. We're talking eight million copies in the first year.

That means in 2002, secular magazines, including *Publishers Weekly* and *New York Times*, had to swallow their pride and report that two religious books, one of them religious fiction and the other religious non-fiction, outsold every other book released by the big New York houses that year.

You don't have to consider the Left Behind series great literature—thousands of writers don't, feeling quite confident they could write better fiction. And you don't have to agree with Bruce Wilkinson's central thesis in *The Prayer of Jabez* to appreciate what God has done with that little book in shaking up the establishment, both Christian and non-Christian, in publishing.

Then another upstart began showing muscle. *The Purpose Driven Life* was a sequel to Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*. Sales exploded. Then Rick and his people developed the 40 Days of Study of *The Purpose Driven Life* and pushed it into churches for use in developing small groups. Sales jumped to two million a month.

If you talk to Jerry Jenkins, Bruce Wilkinson, Rick Warren, or their publishers, they all say, "It's a God thing." And they are right.

Now if it's a God thing, why think about it in terms of "earning the right to be published"? Let's consider *The Prayer of Jabez*. For 30 years, Bruce Wilkinson gave messages on that prayer. He even put it on tape and offered it for sale. Bruce took time to write a major book on the Prayer of Jabez—what the prayer meant to him was that important. Fifteen publishers turned him down and it sat on a shelf or in a drawer for years. Somehow Multnomah got involved and assigned David Kopp to the project and he produced the 92-page version. A writer became involved, a writer who knew what the Gospel writer Luke learned in the first decades after Christ's death, as described in Luke 1:1-4:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4, NASB)

What do I see in these verses that earned Luke the right to be published? Let me list the reasons first and then elaborate on them.

1. Luke had a target reader clearly in mind...Theophilus.
2. Luke did market research to determine what was already available on the topic.
3. Luke did additional research to discover the true facts about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
4. Luke selected and organized his materials for maximum impact on the reader.
5. Luke had a clear purpose for writing his book and constantly kept that in mind.

Now let's examine these five reasons more closely.

### ***1. Luke had a target reader clearly in mind***

Take a look at verse three. What is the name of the target reader? Theophilus.

What mental images arise when you see that name? The name tells us that Theophilus was a Greek. In addition, based on the period when Luke wrote this Gospel, I think I'm safe in assuming he was a new Christian. (He did not yet know "the exact truth" of what he had "been taught.")

Now, if you had been writing a book for a Greek, what kind of book would you have written? I think I might have been tempted to say, "All Greeks are philosophers, so I'll write an *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, as Josh McDowell and his associates did, or possibly *Mere Christianity*, as C.S. Lewis did." I would have been tempted to load it with quotations from Greek philosophers that revealed the emptiness of their philosophy and the superiority of Christ's philosophy.

Yet, Luke did exactly the opposite of that. He stayed clear of a tightly-reasoned philosophical treatise, instead compiling what is largely a book of stories about Jesus, interspersing it with pithy sayings by Jesus and parables told by Jesus.

Philip Yancey writes in his book, *Soul Survivor: How My Faith Survived the Church*, "Reading Tolstoy and Dostoevsky transformed my view of what can be conveyed in words. I had read many books of theology and apologetics, with some profit but much frustration. . . . Yet as I read the two Russians, the core of Christian truth penetrated me more deeply. I learned the power of story, of truth being expressed in an embodied form, inarguably, incontestably. Concepts like grace and forgiveness, which constitute the core of the gospel, get little play in many theology books. I began to grasp why Jesus relied so strongly on story."

Ever hear someone criticize a book by saying, "That's just a bunch of anecdotes. He may be able to tell a good story, but I really would prefer some meaty content?"

I can just imagine the book review editor of the *Corinthian Times* saying, "We really don't need another book of experiences. We're having enough trouble with people who think the Christian life is all experience, and here's Luke giving us all these experiences of the disciples who were with Jesus."

Yet because Luke had his reader clearly in mind, he was not a bit worried about any criticism of his book of stories. You see, they are actual accounts about

- Jesus at work in the lives of people;
- People dominated by Satan who needed Jesus to release them;
- The way God built His kingdom.

Consider the story found in Luke 10:10-37, commonly described as the story of the Good Samaritan. What makes this story worthy of being published, remembering that Luke is writing to a new Christian who is Greek?

Here are some reasons I see as I study the story:

1. Being attacked by robbers was and is a common occurrence, providing instant reader identification.
2. It evokes a strong emotional response among readers. They get angry at the thieves who beat the man, feel strong sympathy for the beaten man, and again get angry at the religious leaders passing by on the other side. Finally, they rejoice at the Samaritan stopping to help the beaten man.
3. The story provides both a negative and a positive role model. The negative role models are the religious leaders who pass by, while the positive role model is the Samaritan.
4. The story travels well cross-culturally, giving it a universal appeal. Religious leaders of all cultures have similar attitudes--and help often comes from the most despised in society.
5. The hero is not a Jew. In fact, he is from among the downtrodden, awakening the reader's sympathy and a desire to imitate his actions.
6. It is application-oriented, with specific action illustrated. So it is not merely a laying on of guilt.

Imagine the story stopping after the Levite had gone by. Great for someone who uses guilt as a motivator. Instead, Jesus ends the story on a positive note of hope--the beaten man is well taken care of in an inn while the Samaritan goes about his business.

The story is also highly personal, since it touches each of us at our own point of need. Some of you are speakers, and I'm sure you do what I do when I address a crowd. I find the really responsive two or three and speak to them. I realized early that if you speak at the mass of people you lose all of them, but focus on two or three and you start getting results.

Clearly, the story is a communication tool without peer. That is why Matthew, speaking of Jesus, writes, "He did not speak to them without a parable" (Matt 13:34 NASB). Mark confirms that Jesus never spoke to those listening to him without including a parable, stories as we call them, in 4:34.

Art Fettig, an international banquet and sales motivational speaker who made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ in the 1970s, told an international Toastmaster's convention in Toronto, "Somebody in this audience needs me. And I'm going to touch one life today. That's my goal. I'm going to touch one life today. And that's the goal I have every time I get up in front of an audience. I say, 'There's one guy that's ready out there.'"

My goal as a writer and literary agent is to change lives through the books I write or represent. If we are going to do that, we need the same focus on one life that needs to be changed.

I remember talking to Margaret Jensen about her target reader when she began work on the manuscript for *Violets for Mr. B.* She said she wanted to reach nurses who were defeated and negative, making them laugh at some of the funny things that occur in nursing as well as gaining a new perspective on how God could use them.

In my more than 56 years in journalism I've written a weekly editorial for a denominational paper, feature articles, a children's story column, a boys' Bible study column, curriculum for inner city teens, curriculum for adults and for boys in Christian Service Brigade, plus many articles for the captains of industry.

How have I been able to target my material for such a diverse readership? For one thing, I do not think of them as readerships. I think of one person in that age group, that social strata, and zero in on that person's way of thinking and way of living. That's how I can communicate to readers as diverse as your eight-year-old son and the chairman of the board of the Mitsui Group in Japan.

Tim LaHaye had written 40 non-fiction books before he teamed up as theologian with Jerry Jenkins, the writer. One of those books sold two million copies. Tim told us at the Writing for the Soul Conference that as he wrote he kept a reader with a sixth grade education in his mind's eye.

In 1963 I had the privilege of interviewing Dr. Helmut Thielicke of Germany on what he considered great preaching. After he described his preparation routine, he concluded with the statement, "Then I go into the marketplace to discover how to apply what I have learned."

Tom Peters has made it abundantly clear in *In Search of Excellence* and *Passion for Excellence* that the business leader needs to get close to his customer. As I read it, I was also thinking of pastors, Bible teachers, and writers. We have too much writing and speaking from limited contact.

Now let's consider your book or article idea. Who is the target reader? What does she or he look like, think about, feel? If you are to become his or her mentor through a book or article, what do you need to learn about him or her? And what must you do to keep that reader clearly in focus as you write?

The second reason Luke earned the right to be published is that

## **2. Luke researched the market for what was available**

Take a quick look at verses one and two of Luke chapter one, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us."

What did Luke do before he began to write? He thoroughly checked with what was already circulating about the life of Jesus. That may be a bit disconcerting to some, for Luke seems to be saying that, as he wrote this segment of the Bible, he did some rather considerable research into what was available.

It is generally conceded by Bible scholars that Mark and Matthew were already circulating by the time Luke wrote his gospel. There may also have been other reports of Jesus' activities circulating. What Luke is telling us is that he is well aware of these. If he were alive today, he undoubtedly would have checked his local Christian bookstore thoroughly before he began writing.

I have represented a Christian motivational speaker who consistently addresses the top leaders in the business world. And helping them understand the importance of a vision is part of his message. But, when I tried to market his book on *VisionQuest*, I drew yawns from publishers—that topic had been well-covered in both the Christian and secular market. And even though as a speaker the author could sell a lot of books, he still had to have a unique angle.

The acquisitions editor who is not aware of what the competition is doing is not true to the calling of God in his life. By the same token, the author who is content to write without market research deserves to receive a stream of rejection letters.

You see, God used Luke's background as a doctor to bring us a unique slice of Jesus' life. Who else gives us the story of Zechariah going dumb? Of Mary going to Elizabeth and magnifying the Lord with that marvelous *Magnificat*? Of the shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem visited by angels?

Can you imagine Matthew, that Jewish specialist who repeatedly quotes from the Psalms of David, passing up the shepherd's story?

Where but in Luke do you find the troubling, yet heartwarming story of a 12-year-old Jesus left behind by his parents, only to find him confounding the wise men of Israel?

Who includes the three parables about prayer that Jesus told? See Luke 11:5-13; 18:2-5; 18:10-14. And I find it instructive to compare the story of the healing of the centurion's servant in Luke 7:1-10 with that in Matthew 8:5-13. Or look at the extra detail Luke provides compared to Mark when he tells the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35 vs. Mark 16:12-13).

We go to Luke to find Christ's heartbeat for the poor, to gain insights into medical conditions in Jesus' day, to understand how vital a part women played during Jesus' ministry on earth. You cannot exclude women from serving Jesus in a wide variety of ways if you read Luke carefully and prayerfully.

In 1980, I looked at what was available on the market and realized there was not a single book focusing on inductive Bible study for preteens, so I packaged a collection of Dash Magazine Bible study articles I had written and sold them as *Preteen Bible Exploration*. When the Billy Graham people saw the book, they were intrigued, for they did not have a Bible study book for follow-up with children. For years, children around North America received copies of my book once they had completed the initial follow-up materials. It happened because I saw a need in the market.

In 1986, we received a manuscript that had been rejected by Word Books because the author was unknown. We knew Jan Frank was a speaker for CLASS, an organization that promotes Christian women speakers nationwide. We also realized *A Door of Hope*, a book about being sexually molested by her father, and the ten steps she and others had to take to deal with the pain even as adults, was truly unique. There was no other book on incest written by a victim who was also a licensed family counselor and a speaker. She had found a niche market. Twenty-four years later that book is still in print.

### ***3. Luke did his own research on the life of Christ***

Luke makes this clear in verse three, when he writes, "It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus."

The only time period when Luke was in Israel long enough to do this kind of research appears to be the two years that Paul was in prison in Caesarea. Can you, in your imagination, see Dr. Luke trudging the Roman roads in Israel, tracking down witnesses to events in Jesus' life? I'm sure the apostle Paul must have been on his mind a lot, but he kept at his research. If you've ever wondered what good came out of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea, the Gospel According to Luke is probably a major example.

Research is, unfortunately, not a strong point with most Christian writers. Those who do research really stand out. I think of Dr. Warren Wiersbe, who for years read a sermon each day in addition to his other research. And, when I read the books of Charles Swindoll, I see that a lot of research has gone into his material.

James Michener has been one of the most popular American writers. He spent years of meticulous research for every novel he wrote. He lived in the area he was going to write about for long periods, digging into the history of the region in great depth, and took the time to absorb the environment visually. No wonder he could write 900-page books that sold better than most short books.

Holly Miller, editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, told me in an interview that most Christian writers do not interview enough people in researching for an article. She recommends five to six interviews for every article. In her case, her article series on women today was quickly recognized by a book editor as unique and she received a book contract for articles she had written.

When I examine the Gospel According to Luke, I sense that he has interviewed scores of people, mulled over the implications of Jesus' life and the vitriolic opposition of the Jewish religious leaders. Thus his research resulted in more than a merely mechanical retelling of events. Rather, through the energizing of the Holy Spirit, his material became the creative and dramatic overview of the greatest life that ever lived.

The kind of knowledge required to write significant Christian literature is felt knowledge, a blend of passion and clear-sighted awareness of reality. When your research results in that kind

of knowledge, then you are not merely a technician, fitting words together to gain X number of dollars in royalty. Nor is it only the expression of a dilettante who likes to play with words and see how they fit together.

Many of the manuscripts I receive are merely a retelling of what the writer has heard over a period of time listening to Christian radio and watching Christian television. They are not really taking that second step of testing those ideas against the experience of the ages, the writing of the sages. Because some recognized leader said it, they accept it.

Research will not only vastly enrich content, it will often help shape content. Outlines may have to be scrapped in the light of new information uncovered by research. The interaction with the big ideas of the ages will be clearly evident as the book or article takes shape.

Research can get us the information and stories we need to write an article or a book, but we need to take a fourth step. And that relates to organizing the material for maximum impact on the reader.

#### ***4. Luke organized his material for maximum impact***

Here's how Luke describes his approach: "to write it out for you in consecutive order..." (v. 3).

Have you ever examined the Gospels from the perspective of organization? Ah, you say, I do not see any special attempt at anything but a chronological sequence of events. Then why did John write, "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)?

We may have been so busy relating this passage to John's central message, that we missed the statement about his organizational intent. So consider, for example, how the gospel writers started their books.

How does Matthew start chapter one? With a genealogy. How boring, you may be saying. I can imagine Matthew submitting the manuscript to editor Horatius at Aquila and Priscilla Publishing in Ephesus. Like most editors, he looked at the first page, sighed, and said, "Another addition to the reject pile."

If it had not been for the Jewish press, it probably would never have been published. Yet Matthew knew that the Jewish reader of his day was fascinated by genealogies, so he hooked his reader with the genealogy of Jesus.

The gospel writer Mark was probably greatly influenced in his approach to writing by that activist, the apostle Peter. No genealogy for him. He just loved the story of that preacher of fire and brimstone, John the Baptist. He could really make the crowd cringe—even the Roman soldiers. So for all other activists he started with John the Baptist in the desert, people flocking to him from all over. Mark loves crowds, as did Peter, and he records "all the people of Jerusalem" turning out for this itinerant preacher.

Luke was a medical man, deeply concerned over a barren woman, a future father struck dumb, and the miracle of birth by a virgin. Luke saw the significance of the story of Zechariah, of the appearance of the angel to the virgin, Mary, and the miracle that both births represented. For Theophilus, the Greek, the supernatural was as much a part of his life as philosophy. The supernatural surrounding the birth of Christ and his forerunner, John the Baptist, was *The Evidence that Demands a Verdict* for him in terms of life commitment.

Even today, the Christian writer's task is to give us a precise slice of life that has unity and coherence. It must have internal and external consistency and validity. Only through a unity inherent in the plan and in the selection of materials chosen can any written material give us the fullest satisfaction.

Have you ever heard someone say about an article or a book, “There’s something missing” or “It doesn’t quite hang together?” That happens when the Christian writer has not established the kind of unity that we see in God--and feel in ourselves as persons in His image. For, when a person says that literature must communicate truth, then he means, among other things, that it must convey unity—all the parts must fit together for a perfect whole.

Yet the selection process is to do more than that. It is also designed to give us a slice of life from the proper perspective as a Christian. Failure to do this leads us to all kinds of tangents. We become too experience-oriented, or we fail to recognize the role of experience. We see God as a great judge, and do not experience His love—or vice versa.

In presenting this balanced approach to the Christian life, we must remember that Jesus and the writers of the epistles do not present truth in isolation from life. They did not present truth for truth’s sake—only as it applied in life situations as a corrective, as a motivator to holiness, as the instigator of hope. Thus, some of the greatest teaching in the Bible is in response to a specific life situation, described in sometimes embarrassing detail.

I am convinced that, as communicators, we must go beyond information to imagination, motivation, and action suggestions if we want to change lives. Thus, we must keep all four elements in mind when organizing our material—just as Luke did.

I have come to see the article or book as a movement. The reader is to be moved from Point A on a continuum to Point B in terms of information, motivation, and action, with imaginative presentation of truth as the key to presenting transcendent truth in humanly perceivable forms. And every article or book needs to keep all four elements in mind as the material is outlined and developed.

Finally, I notice Luke was guided by intention.

### **5. Luke had a clear purpose**

As Luke settled into his stool to pick up the stylus, he had a distinct purpose in mind for his book manuscript. Let me read it for you: “So that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4). Luke wanted to provide written assurance for Theophilus for all he had been taught verbally. The material was to recreate again and again the scenes of Jesus’ miraculous ministry, His atoning death, and His validating resurrection.

If you have a clear purpose for writing your article or book, it will infuse everything you put on paper, or into the computer, with a central dynamic that both guides you as a writer and aids in the communication to the reader. If this purpose grows out of your commitment to helping fulfill God’s purpose on this earth, it will carry you through the many moments when you are discouraged. Finally, your book or article will have the desired result in the life of the reader.

One of the most significant books I have been associated with was *Daktar/Diplomat in Bangladesh* by Dr. Viggo Olson. From the beginning, his purpose was not to satisfy Christian curiosity, or to raise money for the Malumghat Christian Memorial Hospital in Bangladesh, but to bring fellow medical professionals to faith in Christ. He perceived his conversion from agnosticism to faith, and the many hair-raising experiences in Bangladesh, as the hook to get the reader into and through the book. His commitment to Jesus Christ, the many answers to prayer, the response of those in Bangladesh, were to be used to win over even the truly skeptical. Even the back cover material was tailored not to offend the non-believer, but to hook his or her interest.

What was the result? Scores of medical men received Christ, many students in medical schools were challenged to enter medical mission work. An atheistic surgeon in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for example, was given a copy of the book just before he went into the hospital for surgery. While recuperating, he read *Daktar/Diplomat in Bangladesh* and accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior.

More and more this purpose must be relevant to the genuinely felt needs of the reader. Today's generation is asking, "Is it real? Is it relevant?" Everything I read tells me that an increasingly highly technical generation is tired of generalities about being a successful Christian.

Several years ago, for example, I was concerned about the jealousy I was seeing between different areas in our company—and different ministries in our church. Using the language of gang warfare, I called them turf battles. I sat down and wrote an article called "Tire Tracks on My Turf." I sent it off to a denominational magazine, which published it. Then a magazine devoted to business development in under-developed countries reprinted it. The editor of Campus Crusade's newsletter for international staff was so impressed with it, he reprinted it, giving it further international outreach. Finally, another denominational publication picked it up as well. I had touched a hot button that made it relevant internationally.

Let me go back to a book I mentioned earlier to illustrate the significance of purpose. Jan Frank had been sexually molested by her father, a Bible class teacher in an evangelical church. When she married, the memory of what her father had done kept surfacing when she tried to relate to her husband. One day she realized she was even repelled by the aftershave he used because it was the same her father had once used. She sought help from Philippian Ministries, a prayer ministry for those suffering emotionally from memories of abuse. Once she got help, she joined the prayer ministry, counseling and praying with other women who had experienced incest.

Jan Frank decided to write a book that would not only incorporate her experience of finding help, but also provide a ten-step approach to inner healing from memories of abuse. We heard about it and examined it, letting a Campus Crusade for Christ counselor read it. He was so impressed, he asked for copies of the manuscript immediately so he could begin support groups using the material.

We released *A Door of Hope* in 1987, and it was an immediate success. What made it a top seller? Jan Frank had a clearly defined purpose, that of helping women who needed to be freed from the chains of emotional bondage so they could serve the Lord with gladness.

What is your purpose for writing? Unless you can write your goal in one sentence and keep it before you as a lighthouse beacon while writing, you may well end up on the shoals of insignificance, or inconsequentiality.

What earns you the right to be published? Five key elements, none less significant than the other: a clearly targeted reader, knowledge of what is on the market, thoroughly researched content, organization for life change, and a clear purpose. Nothing less will do.

An active Literary Agent for 20 years and Executive Editor of the Jerry B. Jenkins Christian Writers Guild, Les Stobbe also serves as director of International Christian Writers. He has been denominational editor, newsletter editor, book editor, book club vice-president, CE Journal editor, curriculum managing editor, and president of a book publishing house. He has written curriculum, journalism lessons, 14 books, and hundreds of magazine articles. He loves working with writers of both non-fiction and fiction. His website is at [www.stobbeliterary.com](http://www.stobbeliterary.com).

# Preparing Urban Scholar Practitioners

## THEO WILLIAMS

Theo Williams grew up playing basketball, dreaming he'd play professionally someday. But as Theo entered college, God used a series of injuries to change his priorities. He began to coach, using basketball to reach inner city youth for Jesus Christ.

Theo enrolled in the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell. While at CUME, Theo co-founded and served as president of Antioch, Inc., a nonprofit committed to reconciliation, assisted in the planting of a church and honed his poetry skills. Upon graduating in 2004 with a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry, Theo and his wife Nicole spent a year in Jamaica mentoring youth through sports and music.

Theo currently works at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana, as Associate Professor of Communication, as well as the Faculty Coordinator for the Center for Intercultural Development.

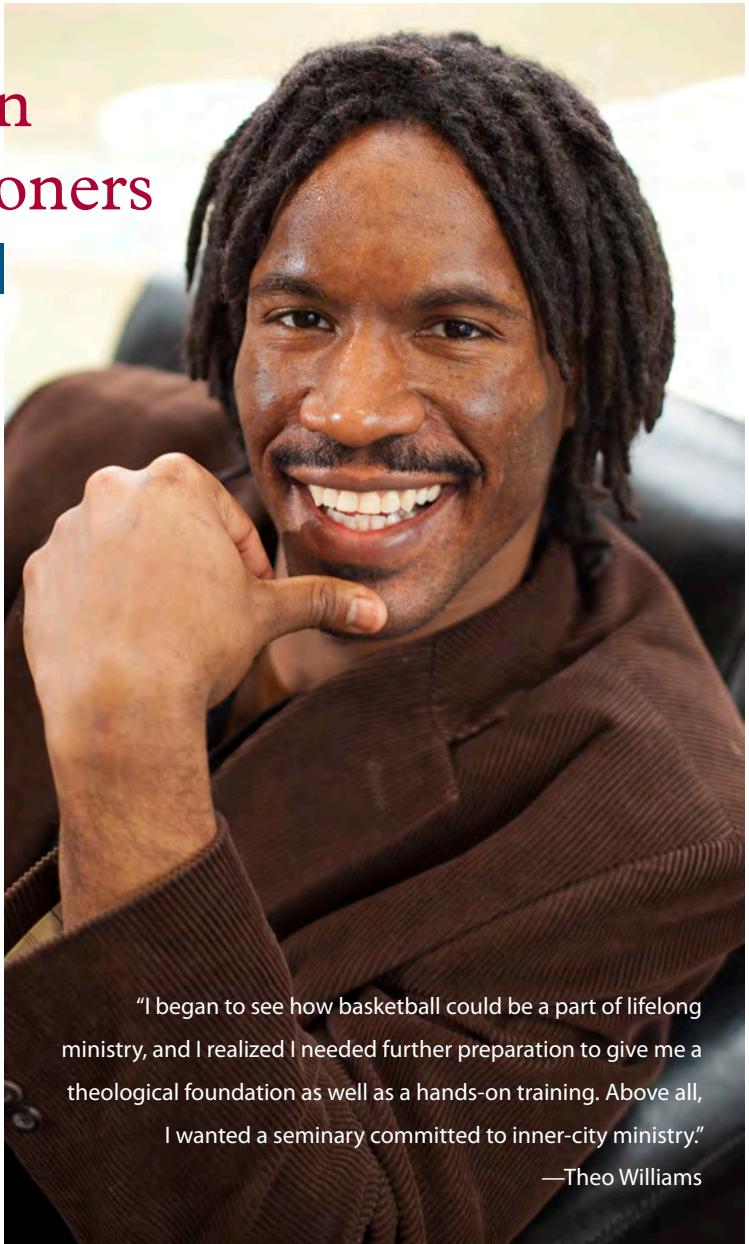
Whether teaching speech, conducting multicultural youth ministry, recording a spoken-word album, or starting a new church, Theo is integrating what he learned in the classroom and through his experiences at CUME.

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"I began to see how basketball could be a part of lifelong ministry, and I realized I needed further preparation to give me a theological foundation as well as a hands-on training. Above all, I wanted a seminary committed to inner-city ministry."

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## The God Who Counts: Reflections on the Trinity

ROYCE GORDON GRUENLER

The title of this article conveys a double meaning. The first is that “God counts” in the colloquial and positive sense for theists and in a negative sense for nonbelievers. The second is that the idea of God’s counting in a more literal manner opens up the field for reflecting on the triune God as the source of all numbering and counting, not only in creating and sustaining the universe in meaningful patterns that are mathematical, and in the pattern of redeeming humankind, but internally as the ultimate Three-in-One who is essentially numbered and who numbers everything in creation. This perspective allows us to explore the biblical and scientific grounds for thinking of the triune God as the ultimate Reality of numbering, the Three-in-One who is the absolute metaphysical Reality who has written the divine signature of oneness and manyness upon all of creation and whose counting and numbering make the universe and our world possible from its beginning to its ending.

Counting and numbering lie at the center of the scientific enterprise with its continually expanding discovery and classification of intricate patterns and systems in the universe, disclosing an amazingly ordered and aesthetically beautiful world. On the other hand, the presence of death and entropy in the world and throughout the universe (the second law of thermodynamics) entails a related aspect of numbering. In the human realm, the parasitic and ultimately destructive geometries of world systems of thought and behavior, which exalt the creature over the Creator (Rom 1:18-32), are countermanded and ultimately defeated in the pattern fulfillment of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, as God the Father “made him who had no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21 NASB). The old creation was “subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:20-21). This foundational text lies within the larger context of Romans and describes the activity of the triune God in creation and re-creation.

I have been thinking recently along aesthetic lines and contemplating a christological study on “The Beauty of Christ,” and I found myself inclined to undertake a little background tour into the beauty of creation and its mathematical foundations by way of the numbering aspects of the Trinity. For some time, I have been interested in the Great Courses series and decided to purchase a DVD and course guidebook on “The Joy of Mathematics” by Arthur Benjamin of Harvey Mudd College. As I have worked through the course, I have appreciated more deeply the beauty of the mathematical systems which underlie the scientific enterprise and how fundamental numbering is in the functioning of our universe and world. Recent developments in biology described by Ian Stewart in *The Mathematics of Life* (Basic Books, 2011) reveal the importance of geometric patterns in genetic structure which follow mathematical rules. Underway is research into the geometry of viruses, with medical implications that aim at interfering with the geometrics of viral assembly. What is arresting about how viruses are seen to work on a host, leading to final entropy if uninterrupted, is that they are comprised of complex genetic material with a viral coat and are arranged in triangular panels like a geodesic dome. But they are being seen as shadow shapes of higher and simpler six-dimensional genetic units and may in future be attacked and destroyed by employing biological mathematics.

On the theological level, as we extrapolate from the close and small to the large and inclusive, we may see in the biological sphere an analogue in physical viral infection to *hamartia* (or sin) infection in the human sphere, where spiritual accountability is required before the moral laws

and judgments of God. Human beings may find divine healing by entering the new creation inaugurated in the person and work of Christ (“Since [in the first class conditional] I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, the reign of God has begun to come upon you” [ephthasen eph’ hymas, inceptive aorist] (Matt 12:28, my trans.). The binding of the viral infector of human beings is like the binding of a strong man who has invaded a house and whose booty is now being reclaimed (v. 29). The binding of the adversary and the release of his captives will ultimately demand the costly but fully adequate death of the Son, for the accounting of the triune God requires a substitutionary atonement that satisfies divine justice, which alone is the source of grace and forgiveness of repentant sinners. Liberal theology, by contrast, views justice largely through social and political redistribution of wealth. Such was the social gospel of Albrecht Ritschl, Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch, and other nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reformers who promulgated an economic ideology that they thought would herald the genesis of the Christian century (hence the title of the journal by that name): It is not the individual who needs to be redeemed, but society. The earlier Reinhold Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society* captures the sentiment of those days, but the ideology of the social gospel and its dream of the ultimate welfare state still lingers in mainline denominations. A colleague of mine related seeing on the bulletin board of a large urban church in New York, “It is not the love of money, but the lack of money, that is the root of all evil.”

Poverty and social inequalities should be pressing concerns for the trinitarian, but not the most pressing. All of my life has been lived, it seems, against the backdrop of the social gospel and its accounting system of economic redemption. From childhood to the present, I have witnessed the great socialist experiments imposed by totalitarian ideologies and their efforts to redeem the poor and oppressed, at horrendous cost in human life. In my lifetime, class warfare and race-based attempts to enslave others for the welfare of their peoples have led to titanic struggles and the blood fields of Europe and Asia. Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi Minh, Pol Pot were all visionaries who drank deeply of nineteenth century Marxist and Darwinian ideologies that drove the forceful redistributions of wealth at any cost. The result was the destruction of a hundred million lives, at least, and all for nothing. Statist economics has proven not to be workable, either, in more democratic societies, as one views the demise of welfare states that have followed the deficit spending mathematics of John Maynard Keynes and are currently running out of money.

A good agenda item for Christians in our present financial straits is to focus on the one-and-many nature of the triune God and appreciate that in our created world there are interactions between ones and manys, between states and individuals, that must be watched and carefully kept in balance, and where there is a simple mathematical rule: You cannot forever spend beyond your means. Accordingly, and not surprisingly, counting, accounting, patterning, and balancing of ones and manys emanate from the triune God who is the ultimate Reality and the perfect balance of oneness and manyness. The One-and-Many God creates the relational structures of the universe and of all human thinking and activity, including the entire spectrum that makes up the typical university curriculum of learning and research. Moreover, the triune God is the one who is the ultimate moral judge, who counts our ethical actions, and before whom all human beings will stand in the great judgment to come, when the books will be opened and every idle word will be counted in the celestial court.

The good news is that God, in the deep redemptive work of the Son of God incarnate, has made a full and acceptable accounting for sinners who accept the divine offer of grace through faith. By this gracious accounting on our behalf, God, in the person of the Son, has taken our sins upon himself, satisfied divine justice by his sacrificial death, and imputed divine righteousness to believers through their faithful response, reconciling them to the triune God. Jesus Christ the Son thereby restores eternal life to the believing community and imparts the power of the Holy Spirit that human beings may experience the sanctification that flows from the new being in

righteousness, which is the joyous mathematics of divine justice and grace, to be enjoyed and applied in all areas of human thought and life.

There are, accordingly, any number of ways one can reflect on the Trinity, since God is the inexhaustible God of whom we know only what is revealed to us in general and special revelation, the two “books” of nature and Scripture respectively. Theological reflections from Scripture deserve pride of place for the Christian, because of their disclosure of the nature and activity of God in the first creation and in the inaugurated new creation through the eschatological unfolding of history. This view is from the top down, descending from God’s self-revelation to human beings. But since by design we are also creatures from the lesser to the higher, arising out of physical and historical patterns which predate and support us, there is much to be learned of the triune God’s activity in creation from a study of the mathematical counting and accounting components by which God creates and sustains the universe and our world within it. In place of the modern presumption of naturalism that exalts the physical and contracts God out of its epistemology, we should begin with the presupposition of the triune God, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things, who upholds all things by the word of his power (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:3). This view of the world and universe explains why scientific inquiry is determined by mathematical patterns, and why these lead us not to such science fiction as parallel universes, but to the triune God who has placed the divine signature of counting on all of reality. Indeed, we might say that to be human is always to be counting and accounting and asking, “What really counts?” The old quip, “But who’s counting?” finds a serious answer in “God’s counting, that’s who.”

To take a familiar example, as we normally begin the day, after a night’s rest during which dreams often seem to involve counting time under pressure, we consciously begin to count the time of the new day: time to get up by the clock, get a series of things done on time in order to get out the door to make appointments, perform required and expected activities throughout the day and evening, always counting the time while giving an account of ourselves, and continually weighing the use of our time by asking what counts and what does not count. From a Christian point of view, what counts in the ultimate sense is to acknowledge that, as human beings, we are created in the divine image and accordingly count with the triune God and are accountable. Because we count with, and are accountable to, our Maker, what really counts is to worship and give glory to God and to experience joy on the highest spiritual level. We may speak of the joy of mathematics, but it is not until we trace back the beam of light that peeks though the boards of the toolshed to its Source (as C. S. Lewis reminds us), that we can experience the joy of the Mathematician, the Artist, the Musician, the Creator, the Speaker, the Redeemer, and Giver of every good and perfect gift.

The reader would accordingly be well advised to keep up an interest in the natural sciences, if only to appreciate how precisely numbered the universe is; so much so that physicists are compelled to describe the structures of reality of mathematical symbols rather than words. Whether theists or nontheists, scientists do, if only tacitly, acknowledge amazement at the fact that the validity of mathematics and the fundamental laws of physics (gravity, thermodynamics, strong force, weak force) extend throughout the universe, beyond the speed of light, simultaneously, whatever time-frames are being examined, whether we are reconstructing the past, predicting the future, or observing the fleeting present. Examination of the present reveals rates of growth and decay that form the doctrinal basis of physical science, namely, the doctrine of uniformitarianism. This doctrine was drummed into me by my science teachers in college, because, without the working hypothesis that a certain mathematically calculable uniformity exists between past, present, and future, science is impossible. A paleontologist like the nontheist Stephen Jay Gould might want to explain the apparent sudden leaps in the genetic record as “punctuated equilibrium,” but his emphasis was on the equilibrium of uniformity, while the “punctuated” part was a stab in the dark to explain what, for the Christian, is evidence of divine patterning. Gould’s views won him and his followers ridicule from orthodox Darwinian gradualists, who dubbed the effort of his school:

“evolution by jerks.” Gould returned the favor by describing their school as “evolution by creeps.”

The fact remains, a mathematical uniformity does underlie the scientific method, but nontheists are confronted by serious contradictions inherent in naturalistic ideology. Secular mathematical operations rely on capital borrowed from the God of numbers, who alone generates and sustains the numbered patterns and systems throughout creation. All nontheistic ideologies end in irrationalism and entropy, like the mythical serpent Ouroboros, which disappears as it swallows its own tail, or like mother nature, worshiped by many in ancient times to the present, who generates life but devours her own children as a cannibal mother.

On the other hand, the biblical doctrine of the Trinity can support the doctrine of uniformitarianism and the mathematical efforts of the natural sciences. The triune God has generated the first creation and inaugurated the second through the sending of the Father, the redemptive work of the Son, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the great turn of the resurrection. Nature and its interpreters cannot by themselves reverse the observable groaning and predictable catastrophic downturn (*kata-strophe*) of the universe. The way down is the way up in Christian perspective, however, for the new creation begins its rise in the death and resurrection of the Son of God incarnate: “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37 NASB). As God has assigned different glories in creation, “so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor 15:42-44 NASB). Recognition of this fact is what really, and ultimately, counts.

Let me pursue this idea of re-cognition and discovery of what really counts in a more dramatic and existential direction, which is not opposed to, but complements, the rather academic approach above. There is a saying among mathematicians that, whereas Elizabeth Barrett Browning could opine, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways,” the mathematician can boast, “How do I count thee? Let me love the ways.” There is, however, something to be said for Elizabeth’s original line. Here let me relate a wonderful discovery I made a few years ago.

I had known of Jane Austen only passingly in my years of reading English literature. When in 2008 the remarkable 1995 screenplay by Andrew Davies of *Pride and Prejudice* reappeared on television, starring Colin Firth as Fitzwilliam Darcy and Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet, I was totally swept away by Austen’s profound understanding of counting and of what really counts in life, especially in the relationship between a man and a woman, but also in the larger sense of the stability and balance between individuals, families, towns, classes, and nation.

I have since read the novel over numerous times, along with her five other novels, and never seem to grow tired of the scintillating dialogue between the principal characters. Austen’s writing represents English language and literature at a high level. But more, there is something very primordial and biblical about Elizabeth’s and Darcy’s early misunderstandings and misconceptions of what counts and their gradual re-cognition of each other’s worth, with many humble confessions along the way, ending in a second proposal that leads at last to the happy family space of Darcy’s beautiful grounds and house at Pemberley. It is classical “comedy” at its best, in the sense of the happy ending, in contrast to the tragic endings of classical drama and contemporary offerings on stage and screen.

In this sense, it is a very Christian novel, though its theology is what the epistemologist Michael Polanyi, in *Personal Knowledge*, would place in the tacit dimension, or the peripheral area of Austen’s vision, supplemental to her focal project of an unfolding romantic story. We need to remember that Jane Austen’s lifelong surround as a clergyman’s daughter was Anglican worship and the Book of Common Prayer. It is to the credit of Andrew Davies, the screen writer, and of Sue Birtwistle, the producer, that they portray Elizabeth and her older sister Jane almost always wearing

pendants with crosses, and in outdoor scenes in their village of Longbourn the parish church is often prominent in the background. And at the end of the story there is a very Christian scene of marriage inside the church of Elizabeth and Darcy, and Bingley and Jane.

As Austen says of her writing, she has compressed her story close and small onto a tiny bit of ivory two inches square. Compressed as the novel may have been in her mind, she has given us an example of fractal geometry in literature, where the smallest fraction of the branch replicates close and small the whole tree. Her little countryside story replicates a recognizable pattern with which we instinctively identify in our own personal and social experiences. Indeed, Vivien Jones, who edited the 1996 edition in the Penguin series and wrote the introduction, concludes her excellent exposition by noting approvingly that in this novel Jane Austen has written “what is still one of the most perfect, most pleasurable and most subtle—and therefore, perhaps, most dangerously persuasive—of romantic love stories.”

Vivien Jones makes this comment after examining the historical and social contexts of Jane Austen’s writing. As a wide reader and an intellectual, Austen is conversant with a number of political trends that define her time and contend with traditional mores. Enlightenment figures had vaulted reason over revelation, rebellion over repression and, in the French Revolution of 1789, the politics of terror over tradition. Romantics were disowning traditional poetry and versifying personal independence and passion. The year 1790 is pivotal in helping us weigh this radical background to Austen’s thinking, and her eventual harmonizing of tradition and change in her post-revolutionary period, when the final edition of *Pride and Prejudice* was published (1813). This was the year Edmund Burke wrote his scathing critique of French radicalism, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke interpreted the revolution as an attack on the basic unit of the family, along the lines of Aristophanes’ satire in *The Clouds*: “Chaos reigns, having kicked out Zeus.” Jane Austen was to agree with Burke in this regard, and she portrays Elizabeth as fiercely moral in defending sexual and family propriety. Her emphasis here is on what we might call the oneness-factor, that is, the unity principle in marriage, family, and nation. On the other hand, 1790 also witnessed the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, and two years later, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which constituted a defense of revolutionary principles, especially of women’s rights and their equality with men on every level, including rational discourse and full citizenship.

Austen would agree with this as well, and she portrays Elizabeth as an independent spirit, full of life and vitality and one hundred percent the equal of Darcy in intellectual sparring and compelling articulation of the English language in defense of her feminine integrity. Elizabeth is a genuine, active feminist who is an advocate of the “many” principle of individual expression. But she is unwilling to follow Wollstonecraft’s more radical feminism, which puts off happiness to some future revolution. And Wollstonecraft herself suffers the ultimate tragedy of her rejection of religion when she dies in childbirth and utters her last words, “What a waste.”

Elizabeth, however, accommodates the pursuit of individual happiness in the present with an advantageous marriage into a more promising social system (the “one” principle) that will afford her a wider space to grow with her husband, giving and receiving in an equal partnership, where Darcy will profit as much from her as she from him. She is sustained by an eschatology of hope: “she looked forward with delight to the time when they should be removed from society so little pleasing to either, to all the comfort and elegance of their family party at Pemberley.” These are the closing words of the penultimate chapter 60. Pemberley is, therefore, a foretaste of heaven, and we can imagine that Elizabeth will work with Darcy to join the quiet revolution that is already beginning to change the English landscape, where the landed gentry welcome into their family circle the successful entrepreneurs of trade who work for a living by their wits (her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners), and who are truly loved for their individual worth and, in the case of the Gardiners, for playing a key role in bringing them together: “Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and

they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them."

These are the last words of the book, and they sound an upbeat theme of love, gratitude, harmonious relationship and unity, all very trinitarian and very beautiful. Little wonder, then, that *Pride and Prejudice* continues to be one of the best selling romantic novels in the English language, and Jane Austen revered as one of the most talented and astute of all authors, male or female. I personally believe she deserves special attention and gratitude from Christians for writing very deeply spiritual novels that, however subtly and tacitly religious, convey a trinitarian understanding of the interpenetration of the one and the many, of the individual and the family, and the equal interplay of the feminine and the masculine. In all six of her novels, the women are the ones who make things move and who uphold the highest moral standards, though they make mistakes and are sometimes slow to take action, but all the heroines grow in understanding and in the end get it right. It is to the honor of Jane Austen that, though suffering many disappointments in her life and dying very young, she left us the legacy of a wonderful mind and heart and did not in death consider her life a waste. I consider her writings a personal gift, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, and am the better man for getting to know her.

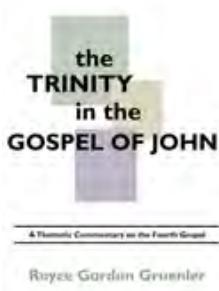
In his *Ecclesiastical Laws*, the Anglican clergyman Richard Hooker (d. 1600) makes a convincing case that the triune God has fashioned the world to function according to laws appropriate to every level of creation. For human beings, who are created in the image of God and therefore have the capacity to rethink God's thoughts, there are three distinct but interrelated levels that are governed by definite laws which bring reward or punishment in their use or misuse. Beginning at the lowest level, there is the physical, or what we may call the somatic, which concerns the proper functioning of the body. Eating well and moderately brings health, while ingesting poisons or jumping off a cliff causes death. The choice to do the right thing leads to the second level, which is the psychological, the realm of values, virtues, and disposition, including prudence. If one disobeys the law of prudence and takes no precaution in walking on ice in the wintertime, one then slips down into the first level and is forced to obey the law of gravity. The same is true of the highest level, the pneumatic or spiritual, the most important area where decisions that count the most for eternity are made. Failure to obey the laws of rightness of relationships, both vertically with the triune God and laterally with other persons, will cause one to slip and fall subject to the laws that govern psychological well-being. Family systems, especially when informed by a Christian perspective, is one of the most helpful methods in psychology for discerning aberrations and seeking corrections according to the psychological laws that govern interrelationships. Both Elizabeth and Darcy come from dysfunctional families and feel trapped by the lack of space to express themselves freely and creatively. Elizabeth's home is Longbourn, and she has long borne a mother who is silly, a father who is a curious mixture of irony and caprice, two younger sisters who are interested only in passion, and another who is a moral recluse. Only her older sister Jane is a confidant, but Jane sees everyone as wonderful and lacks discernment of the follies of others. Darcy is twenty-eight years old and by now is supposed to have married his cousin, the sickly daughter of his aunt, lady Catherine de Bourgh, but it is obvious that he is not romantically attached to her. Darcy's deceased mother was lady Catherine's sister, and the two had made a pact that their two babies were to marry and merge the families' fortunes. If Darcy's mother was anything like his domineering aunt, we can imagine why he has waited so long. Both Darcy and Elizabeth have strong and resilient characters, however, but both are proud and prejudiced in their own ways and have much to learn from each other in the way of proper manners, humility and mutual appreciation. One of the nicest disclosures in the story is when Darcy, following Elizabeth's happy acceptance of his second proposal, confesses his selfish and overbearing conceit, and pays her the highest compliment by saying, "and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth!" That is a great Christian line and can come only from a heart that has been transformed. In this finely drawn

exchange, all three levels of Hooker's laws are functioning as they were meant to function by their Creator. A reborn Darcy and a reborn Elizabeth are now together spiritually, psychologically, and somatically, and are about to become one through Christian marriage, with the happy prospect that this melding of equals will result in Elizabeth becoming more the Elizabeth her Maker intends her to be, and Darcy more the Darcy he is destined to become. Pemberley will afford the space to expand their happy and elegant family circle, by inviting the Gardiners and their children, Darcy's sister Georgiana, and Elizabeth's sister Kitty, and, we would expect, the prospect of imitating the divine Family by generating their own children and nurturing their individual uniqueness within a harmonious family. One of the pleasures of reading Jane Austen's novels is that she does not spell out every detail in the final chapter, but invites us to participate in her authorship by imagining what might happen in the happy household of Pemberley.

Human love and rightness are, therefore, seen in this little portrait two inches square, to be small but not insignificant reflections of God's internal love as ontological Trinity, and are by heavenly design the living points of contact between the divine and the human which make spiritual discourse possible. The power of creative language between human beings is a derivative from the heavenly discourse of the Persons of the Trinity. Austen was a great student of the power of human discourse, and her novels echo the biblical emphasis on the necessity of honest, transparent, and covenanted language between persons and God. I have noted elsewhere (*The Trinity in the Gospel of John*, Wipf & Stock, 2004) that throughout Scripture it is clear that the texture of language is woven into the very fabric of reality. In this article I have focused on the counting aspect of language, which begins with the numbered and numbering Trinity. Everything in creation is numbered by mathematical systems where counting and accounting on various levels makes it all work. On the highest human level of creation, the fundamental question that determines our destiny of life or death is our choice of what counts. God speaks not only to bring the world into being but to redeem it after wrong primordial choices have been made by creatures made in the divine image. God speaks as divine Community because God is the social God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons in everlasting fellowship, one God, who is the ultimate source of all that counts. Speaking, conversing, and counting in dynamic and inexhaustible fellowship are the essential hallmark of God's own reality.

Scripture also discloses that the human family, as well as the whole family of creation, reflects the divine Community of God in conversation and counting. To be is to converse together creatively and faithfully in unity of thought and praise of God, with all the richness of variety on many levels of intensity, including a man and a woman falling in love.

Royce Gordon Gruenler is Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.



*The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel.* No book in the Bible says more about the Trinity than the Gospel of John. Of the innumerable commentaries published on this much loved Gospel, few have focused on this central theme. Devoted Bible students will find in this thematic commentary a dimension to the Gospel of John they may have noticed only vaguely. As they follow the author through this Gospel chapter by chapter, they will acquire a far deeper understanding of the Triune God, whom they serve because he has served them.

Royce Gordon Gruenler is Professor of New Testament Emeritus, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

## “You Will Appear as Fishers” (Mark 1:17): Disciples as Agents of Judgment

CHIP ANDERSON

As a new Christian in 1978, I was promptly placed into a small group of Christian Air Force colleagues for discipleship. Besides encouraging consistent church attendance, a daily prayer-life, and plenty of Bible study, we had a rather tight regimen of Bible verse memorization. For “getting into the Bible,” we used the Navigator’s *Designed for Discipleship* (or *DfDs*) and for “getting the Bible into us,” we used the Navigator’s *Topical Memory System* with verse packs and a pocket carrying case to promote regular memorization and self-testing. In the first pack, “Live the New Life,” we memorized Matthew 4:19 under the topic, “Witness,” “And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”<sup>1</sup> This memory verse was to encourage our commitment to witnessing, that is, to be “fishers of people” for Jesus.

Many understand the *fisher*-promise to mean that Christians are to *fish* for the unsaved and *catch* them for Christ. Mark 1:17, the text under consideration in this study, and its parallel, Matthew 4:19, are regularly used to promote commitment to evangelism and to being a verbal witness. If one presumes this application, *fishing* is a positive metaphor, an illustration of evangelism, or a “picture of winning people to Christ.” Interpreting *fishers of men* in this way assumes that *fishing* is a biblical metaphor for evangelizing (*fishers of men* = evangelism/witnessing), and would have been understood as such without explanation by the disciples and, later, the hearers/readers of Mark’s Gospel. On his reading, the *fishing* metaphor is, then, transferable to today’s fishing context, and, thus, can be utilized as an illustration to call Christians to evangelize (i.e., to fulfill being “fishers of men”).

It is common for preachers, evangelists, Sunday school teachers, Christian media celebrities, and even Bible professors to repeat Jesus’ words in Mark 1:17 (as well as Matt 4:19) as a call and an illustration for evangelism. Messages on evangelism and witnessing using “the different types of fishing” are commonplace, utilizing images to promote the Christian call to evangelize and to exemplify the various ways one can “fish” for people: fly fishing, deep sea fishing, catching fish in nets, and using bigger nets to catch lots of fish (i.e., more people). However, I began to think differently about Jesus’ words, *fishers of men*, when a preacher once suggested, “Sometimes you have to use a club, or even throw dynamite in the water to blast the fish out. Likewise, sometimes you have to use extreme methods to win people to Christ.” At that moment, many years ago, I knew something was wrong with *that* use of *this* particular biblical metaphor.

While completely appreciating those who *catch* people for Christ, I believe we should pause long enough to consider: as a metaphor, if fish are unsaved people, imagine evangelism *from the fish’s perspective*. Truly, the metaphor seems mismatched. Nonetheless, almost every commentator reflecting on Jesus’ words in Mark 1:17 posits a positive interpretation for the use of *fishers of men*. This study seeks to determine Mark’s intention in presenting the *fisher*-promise, and, thus, reassess the metaphor’s impact on the church’s understanding of evangelism, and in particular how the *fisher* metaphor expands the Christian community’s role in social action as a legitimate component of evangelism.

### The misplaced self-evident *fishers* metaphor

Admittedly, evangelism and fishing, at first glance, seem to be a match. So, when we read or hear the biblical phrase *fishers of men*, it appears to be a self-evident metaphor. Or, is it? However

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1 All Scripture references, unless otherwise indicated, are quoted from the New American Standard Bible, 1995.

neatly these words fit in our stories, illustrations, and anecdotes about witnessing and evangelism, we should not simply assume that *fishers of men* is a self-evident metaphor for the modern reader of the Bible. Think seriously about the *fishers of men* = evangelism/witnessing imagery. Carry it through as a metaphor: Is fishing *ever* good for the fish? The coming of the fisherman for the fish is not good; it is not a blessing. It is dangerous, menacing, ominous, dire, and presents a very life-ending possibility. Fishermen use tricks, cons, lures, hooks, and false hope. If winning souls for Jesus is the meaning of this metaphor, then it loses its seemingly clear metaphorical correspondence when it is transferred to the positive Christian activities of witnessing, evangelism, outreach, and church growth. Fishing is, simply put, not good for fish. The presence of fishermen is not a good sign for them at all. This, all by itself, suggests that we need to look elsewhere for the background that gives meaning (and interpretative depth) to the *fishers of men* metaphor.

### ***Translations do not always help***

In order to find meaning in a text of Scripture, there is a temptation to make a leap from the English words or concepts in our translations to whatever corresponds in our contemporary experience. Sometimes it is helpful to turn to various translations. However, in this case, the translations do not help us. In the *New American Standard Bible*, the Mark 1:17 text follows closely to the Greek, nearly word-for-word: “And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men’” (*Kai eipen autois ho Iēsous, Deute opisō mou, kai poiēsō humas genesthai halieis anthrōpōn*). Other versions render Mark 1:17 in relatively similar, nearly word-for-word, ways:

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men” (NIV, 1984).<sup>2</sup>

And Jesus said unto them, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (KJV and ASV).

Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (NKJV).

And Jesus said to them, “Come ye after me; [and] I shall make you to be made fishers of men” (Wycliffe New Testament).

Many translations are very straightforward with little interpretation. However, some modern translations like the *NETBible* reinforce the “fishing = evangelism/witnessing” understanding: “Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people’” (NETB). The *NETBible* expands the Mark 1:17 text, offering more an interpretation than a translation, with little explanation why the text refers to the disciple’s vocation rather than a technical term with antecedent, connotative meaning. Other modern or contemporary versions offer similar “interpretations” of Mark 1:17:

Jesus said to them, “Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish” (CEV).

Jesus said to them, “Come follow me, and I will make you fish for people” (NCV).

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people” (TNIV).

### ***Paraphrases lead away from intention***

As well, paraphrases and transliterated versions, with few exceptions, go in one direction, offering even less help in deciphering Mark’s intent: *fishers of men* is a self-evident metaphor for evangelizing (i.e., *catching people for Jesus*). For example, the *New Living Translation* paraphrases (actually interprets) Mark 1:17: “Jesus called out to them, ‘Come, be my disciples, and I will show

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<sup>2</sup> While the 1984 version keeps the translation closer to word-for-word, the 2011 NIV renders Mark 1:17, “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

*you how to fish for people!"*" (NLT). As well, *The Message* paraphrases (again, actually interprets) both Mark 1:17 and Matthew 4:19, not only asserting the supposed self-evident metaphor of "fishing = evangelizing," but also adding words not in the original Greek that provoke the reader/hearer to think Jesus actually uttered these words: "Jesus said to them, 'Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass'" (MSG). Although all translation involves a measure of interpretation, some versions directly interpret, rather than translate, insisting that Jesus is making a correspondence between fishing and activities of "soul winning." This, however, moves the reader away from what Mark had in mind as he developed his narrative, rather than being compelled by the intention of the narrative world that Mark is creating for those who would hear his Gospel.

As the remainder of this article will bear out, *fishers of men* was a self-evident metaphor when Jesus used it and, then, as Mark utilized it in his narrative world, not because some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen or Mark's audience was familiar with fishing, but because there is an Old Testament promised, eschatological expectation which is its referent. The picture Jesus was intending to invoke, perhaps, has little to do with casting out fishing nets or someone casting a fishing pole out in hopes of catching fish. I will suggest that a radically different metaphor is in mind, one that fits Jesus' immediate context and, as well, is consistent, therefore, with the narrative Jesus and, therefore Mark, has crafted. The concept of *fishers* is not so much about Christian activity—though there is action to be taken—but that the metaphorical nature for *fishers* furnishes the definition and content for the range of potential evangelistic outcomes, i.e., the application for *fishers*.

There is a more difficult, harsher interpretation within a negative framework found in the potential correspondence to Old Testament *fisher*–judgment texts and language, which are often traded for the ease of simple word–correspondence at the popular level or hermeneutical umbrage at the more academic level. This hinders hearing the impact on evangelism in the richness of a more difficult, but a legitimate, biblical association with the Old Testament concept of *fishers*. In the next section, we turn our attention to Mark's text and how *fishers of men* points toward such an Old Testament and eschatological background.

### Mark's Gospel set-up and the meaning of the *fisher*–promise

The meaning of the phrase *fishers of men* comes to us in a story, not a lecture; the argument is narrative, not syllogistic. The significance of *fishers of men* first appears within the structure of the introduction to Mark's Gospel story, and then in how this summary is worked out in the narrative world created by Mark. The readers, with varying degrees, are aware of the story and are familiar with the Gospel as it spread throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Even if readers are unfamiliar with all the potential Old Testament referents, they are already familiar with the Gospel story itself and the introduction to Mark's narrative gives the impression that there is an Old Testament background defining the Gospel. Mark's introduction is crafted and structured with enough narrative markers to help the reader make sense of the *fishers*–promise and its role in his narrative world. Mark's programmatic summary in 1:1–3 draws on Old Testament eschatological promise–fulfillment and expectation–consummation. This does not stop at verses 1–3, but continues with the verses (4–17) that sets up the narrative world. Although most are comfortable viewing Mark's introduction through verse 15, there is no reason to exclude, as part of his introductory remarks, the initial invitation to join in the administration of the inaugurated kingdom (vv. 16–28).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> I take the destination of Mark's Gospel-tract to be Rome, or a wider church community strongly under Rome's (i.e., Caesar's) direct influence.

<sup>4</sup> Suzanne Watts Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); J. Ted Blakley, "Incomprehension or Resistance? The Marken Disciples and the Narrative Logic of Mark 4:1–8:30" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 2008).

Preceding the *fisher*–promise, Mark sets the foundation (*the beginning*, v.1) of *the Gospel of Jesus, the Son of God* (1:1–3), reaching back to Old Testament contexts (Exod 23; Isa 40; Mal 3) that link his Gospel to covenant expectations, judgments regarding land–codes and justice stipulations, and God’s actions regarding redemption and remnant.<sup>5</sup> As he begins to shape his Gospel, Mark, then, crafts indicators that highlight characters and the roles they play (vv. 4–19). Mark’s interest in these characters is not necessarily for *the person* (i.e., John the Baptist, 4–8; the Holy Spirit, 9–10; Jesus the Son, 11–13), or for *the group* (i.e., *followers/fishers of men*, 16–18), but for their eschatological significance in relation to the inaugurated kingdom. Mark, indeed, sets up his Gospel introduction in such a way that the hearers/readers should naturally draw such conclusions. The following examines how this helps to decipher the original “self–evident” meaning of the *fisher*–promise in Mark 1:17.

### ***The “happening appearances” (*ginomai*, 1:4, 9, 11, 17): Character introduction***

There is a grammatical and stylistic clue in Mark’s use of an overlooked, yet much used, often un–translated Greek word, *ginomai*, which is strategically embedded in the introduction of his Gospel narrative (Mark 1:4, 9, 11, 17).<sup>6</sup> Each use of a *ginomai* text marks an introduction of a character that is important both for developing the narrative and for explaining the nature of the Gospel. Each use helps to reinforce the significance of Mark’s programmatic summary (vv. 1–3)<sup>7</sup> and presents or enhances an Old Testament eschatological framework for understanding *the Gospel of Jesus–Messiah, the Son of God* (1:1).

The common Greek word *ginomai* is used throughout Mark’s Gospel (42x) and typically carries its casual meaning of *be* and/or simply a “happening” in the narrative world. The word, for the most part, helps move the story forward, giving the reader a sense of being *in the present*, pulling the hearer/reader along. The common translative significance is along the lines of time, arrival (i.e., *came*), or simply the nuance of narrative movement. Some translations (and commentaries), however, leave out the implications of *ginomai* altogether. Perhaps, this is why the first four times Mark uses *ginomai* very little, if anything, is made of its significance by translators or, even, commentators on the texts. In fact, most translations of Mark 1:4, 9, 11, and 17 gloss over the possibility that there is some intentional significance to be drawn from Mark’s use of *ginomai* and, particularly, the significance of verses that set–up the nature of *the gospel of Jesus–Messiah, the Son of God* (1:1).

Among translations, the renderings of Mark 1:17 are various. In the NIV, we see a translative range: “. . . so John **came**”<sup>8</sup> (1:4), “At that time Jesus **came**” (1:9), “a voice **came** from heaven” (1:11), and, in 1:17, “I will make you fishers of men,” omitting a translation or nuance of *ginomai* altogether. The NASB presents this set of verses: “John the Baptist **appeared** in the wilderness” (1:4), “In those days Jesus **came** from Nazareth” (1:9),<sup>9</sup> “a voice **came** out of the heavens” (1:11), and, in the text under consideration, “I will make you **become** fishers of men” (1:17). The *Today’s New International Version* offers similar translations to the NASB for the first three—“And so John the Baptist **appeared** in the wilderness” (1:4), “At that time Jesus **came** from Nazareth” (1:9), “a voice **came** from heaven” (1:11)—but leaves *ginomai* out of any translative sense in 1:17 (“and I will send you out to fish”).

The typical range of *be*, *happening*, *came/come*, and even *appear*, all seem plausible renderings here and elsewhere throughout Mark’s Gospel. And, the places *ginomai* is left untranslated or is

<sup>5</sup> See my “‘Wasted Evangelism’ (Mark 4): The Task of Evangelism and Social Action Outcomes,” *Africanus Journal* Vol. 1, No. 2 (November 2009): 39–58.

<sup>6</sup> Note, not present in some manuscripts, but a verb needs to be supplied, even if not original, and the choice of *ginomai* is logical.

<sup>7</sup> “‘Wasted Evangelism’.”

<sup>8</sup> I have bolded words directly used to translate *ginomai*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ginomai* is not translated directly and is merged with the time reference. Note, in translations of Mark 1:9 offering the English word “came,” the word is actually a rendering of the Greek verb *ēlthen* (he came) and not *ginomai*.

absorbed into the sense of other translated words are, as well, plausible and potentially a fair way to be rendered. Yet, its omission can leave the English reader without an awareness of the importance of the word's presence for determining the meaning and significance *in this particular context*.<sup>10</sup> For those translations that leave out *ginomai* in Mark 1:17 altogether, such translations obscure and hinder hearing its value as Mark sets up his narrative and the possibilities of meaning that assist the reader of English texts to interpret what follows. Most translations conceal the possibility that Mark utilizes *ginomai* to help the reader understand the significance of Jesus' invitation to follow Him and *become fishers of men*.

Obviously, context helps determine the sense Mark gives to *ginomai*, nonetheless, there are valid reasons to render *ginomai* in its first four uses as *appear* or more specifically *appear publicly*. In other words, *ginomai* is used, not simply to indicate *being* or to give a present sense for the readers, but *a happening*, and, more specifically, *an appearance* of a character significant to the narrative development. The series of *ginomai* texts in Mark 1:4–17 indicate the *appearance in public* of characters that draw upon and affirm the programmatic sense Mark developed in his composite Old Testament reference in vv. 2–3.

The sense of *appear* is an acceptable rendering for *ginomai* and should not be eliminated because it does not fit preconceived and popular understandings of the *fishers of men* verse. First, Mark deliberately includes *ginomai* in this text, whereas Matthew leaves it out altogether (as does Luke in his version of the *fisher/hunter* text, 5:10). Second, the use of *ginomai* carries the idea of “to come into existence,” “to become,” even “to be born” and, as many translations indicate, can be rendered as *appear* (such as NASB and TNIV). Translating *ginomai* as “appear publicly” is reasonable in these first four instances in Mark's introduction. The range of meaning allows such a rendering or nuance. Third, each of these four *ginomai* texts draw on eschatological and Old Testament themes to introduce the appearance of characters involved with inaugurating the Gospel of the Kingdom. Mark sets up the introduction to his Gospel-story with a series of eschatological Old Testament expectations that find fulfillment in the “public appearance” of God's Kingdom/Gospel agents:

John the Baptist *appeared* (*egeneto*) in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (1:4).

And *it appeared* (*egeneto*) in those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan and immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him... (1:9–10).

...and a voice *appeared* (*egeneto*) out of the heavens, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (1:11).

And Jesus said to them, “Come (after) Me, and I will make you *to appear* (*genesthai*) as fishers of men” (1:17).

### ***Character introduction as eschatological agents***

We discover in this *ginomai* series the introduction of Jesus as the affirmed Messiah Son of God (1:11ff.) and three characters in supporting roles and relationships to Jesus: John the Baptist, harbinger and way-preparer of Jesus (1:4ff.), the Holy Spirit, who endows Jesus (1:9ff.), and, then, Jesus' followers, whom He will create to be *fishers of men* (1:17ff.). Each of these *ginomai* texts draw on Old Testament referents, explicit and implied, that offer defining, eschatological distinctiveness to both the Gospel and to the characters being introduced.

***Mark 1:4ff:*** John the Baptist's eschatological significance is widely recognized, particularly his role as the anticipated forerunner and herald of the Kingdom and the Messiah's soon appearance.

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10 Use of *euthus* (*immediately*) in v. 19 gives a sense of immediate “inauguration.”

The immediate reference locating John *in the wilderness* (1:4) links back to Mark's Isaiah 40 reference in verse 3, provoking John's relationship with Yahweh's expected appearance to execute the future, new exodus. John's call to baptism is a harbinger event of the coming of the Spirit (v.8) and, as well, the time of repentance, before the coming of the kingdom. John's clothing draws on Elijah's appearance in 2 Kings 1:8, as well as in Zechariah 13:4<sup>11</sup> that links the *returning true prophet* with Elijah.<sup>12</sup> Also, there is the obvious link to Mark's opening programmatic summary (vv. 2–3) with the reference to Malachi 3:1, which is associated with Malachi 4:5–6:

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

Later in Mark's narrative, this connection is made even more directly:

They asked Him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him” (9:11–13).

Additionally, John introduces Jesus as the One who comes after him who is *mightier than I* (1:7), which further links Mark's programmatic reference in vv. 2–3 to Isaiah 40, where Yahweh is referred to as the Lord God who *will come with might* (Isa 40:10). The Isaiah 40 text is the eschatological promise of Yahweh's new exodus, a redemption that causes His glory to be seen by *all flesh* (Isa 40:5). And, it should be noted that John is the eschatological messenger (Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3) who links Jesus to the eschatological expectation of the coming of the Spirit: “*I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*” (1:8).

The Old Testament is rich in its material indicating the coming of the eschatological Spirit.

Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,  
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field,  
And the fertile field is considered as a forest (Isa 32:15).

“For I will pour out water on the thirsty land  
And streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring  
And My blessing on your descendants” (Isa 44:3).

“It will come about after this  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;  
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
Your young men will see visions.  
Even on the male and female servants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days (Joel 2:28–29).

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezek 36:26–27).

<sup>11</sup> “Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive” (Zech 13:4).

<sup>12</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICGT: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 65–68.

“I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord God (Ezek 39:29).

Mark 1:4 begins a series of character introductions (cf. vv. 9, 11, 17) that are pivotal in defining the eschatological nature of the Gospel, assisting the reader to understand that God’s Old Testament types and promises are coming to culmination, fulfillment in the appearance of Jesus—Messiah, the Son of God (1:1). *John the Baptist appeared in history (egeneto) as God’s eschatological agent, announcing the inauguration of Christ’s kingdom and introducing the Messiah.*

**Mark 1:9ff:** Familiarity with Jesus is assumed in Mark, thus the absence of biographical information (e.g., birth narrative, other family, or current historical record), which Guelich suggests likely stems from Mark’s intention “to introduce Jesus in the framework of redemptive history.”<sup>13</sup> As suggested by the programmatic summary in 1:2–3 and the eschatological setting established in the introduction of John the Baptist (vv. 4–8), Mark is concerned about placing the hearer/reader *immediately* into the realm of redemptive, eschatological fulfillment of Old Testament promises. At the second introductory *ginomai* text (1:9), Mark associates Jesus with the coming of the Holy Spirit, which, too, draws on eschatological expectations regarding the Messiah and/or Yahweh to the Spirit:

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD (Isa 11:2).

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the nations (Isa 42:1).

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD has anointed me  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And freedom to prisoners (Isa 61:1).

This connection enhances the already established link to the Spirit referenced by John (1:8).<sup>14</sup>

Although the role of the Spirit in Mark’s Gospel is minimal, an underlying intention is to show the link of the Spirit to the redemptive era that has dawned in the coming of Messiah Jesus. It is the Spirit that casts (1:12) Jesus into the desert and Jesus exists in the mode of the Spirit (2:8; 8:12). In Mark 3, we hear that the rejection of Jesus as Messiah is an unforgivable sin *against the Holy Spirit* (v. 29). Later, Mark reveals the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ own apology as the promised and rightful Davidic–Son–King, the type to come (“*David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘The Lord said to My Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet,’*” Mark 12:36). After John baptizes Jesus, “the heavens” open and the Holy Spirit, like a dove, descends *upon* Him. The opening of the heavens is reminiscent of Isaiah 64:1<sup>15</sup> (*Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down, That the mountains might quake at Your presence*) and the reference to the “dove” has connections to Israel and God’s act in the flood of Genesis.<sup>16</sup> Later, Jesus’ followers will respond

13 Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34a; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 31.

14 Also, connected to 1 Sam 16:13; Judg 3:10; 6:34.

15 *Anoixē ton ouronon* (Isa 63:19c, LXX); Gen 7:11; Ps 77.23 (LXX); Isa 5:1; 18:6; 24:18; Ezek 1:1; Zech 14:4; T. Levi 18:6–8; T. Jud. 24:3—link Spirit with Messiah.

16 The reference *dove*, sometimes used as a symbol of Israel (b. Ber. 53b; b. Š49a; Ct. Rab. 1:15, 2; 2:14, 1; 4:1, 2);

to being the misfits, those out of place, misunderstood, persecuted, falsely charged, accused of treason by speaking, not on their own, but by the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11).

These referents link the Holy Spirit to the promise-fulfillment, type-antitype context that Mark utilizes to indicate the in-breaking of the Kingdom into the realm of humanity: *And it appeared publicly (egeneto) in those days that Jesus was baptized by John, one of God's eschatological agents, when the heavens opened and the eschatological Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus.*

**Mark 1:11ff:** After Jesus is introduced by John as the “mightier One who is coming” and who would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, a voice from Heaven announces, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (1:11). This affirmation has been associated with four significant Old Testament texts:

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen one in whom My soul delights  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the nations (Isa 42:1).

He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you” (Gen 22:2).

“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You’” (Ps 2:7).

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn’” (Exod 4:22).

Rather than choosing which Old Testament prophecy God is fulfilling, there is value in understanding that all are implied, particularly since all foretell redemptive-historical and typological aspects of God's action in history. Each establishes Jesus' link to Old Testament expectations and typological correspondences regarding Jesus' authority as God's Son-King over the nations (Ps 2:7),<sup>17</sup> His association to the nation-blessing promises given to Abraham (Gen 22:2), the redemptive expectations of Yahweh's Servant of the New Exodus (Isa 42:1), and the undervalued reference to God calling His newly “baptized” Israel, “My Son” (Exod 4:22).<sup>18</sup>

*The voice out of the heavens appears in order to affirm publicly (egeneto) that Jesus is God's Son-King, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises, and the One who inaugurates the New Exodus.* Jesus is, indeed, one of God's eschatological agents of the inaugurated kingdom.

### ***Fishing Is the Outcome of God's Inauguration of His Kingdom***

Each of the first three *ginomai* texts introduces characters in the narrative who have roles that play a part in inaugurating the presence of the kingdom. Perhaps, this is why there is a summary interlude, referring to the Gospel and Jesus' mission (1:14–15), which contains both the need for repentance and belief/faith (*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel*, 1:15) just prior to the last of the *ginomai* texts in the series. These

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also a likely reference to the flood (1 Pet 3:20–21; Gen 8:8–12), making a stronger connection to God's redemptive action in time and space.

17 It is broadly understood that the foretold future Messiah is related to David (Ps 2; cf. 1QS 9:11; Test. Levi 7; Test. Jud. 21:1ff). Christopher Rowland notes that “later the Messianic figure narrows more specifically to be described as a ‘descendent of David who would act as the eschatological agent of God’ (cf. 2 Esd 12:32; Syr. Bar 29:3; 39:7; 40:1; 70:9; 72:2)” (“Messiah,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds. Alan Richardson and John Bowden [Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1983], 358–359). Also see James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, in *Christianity in the Making*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 705–708; Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 312–313.

18 The reference to God calling Israel “My Son” also leads into the first exodus event.

eschatological characters promote (and imitate) that mission. It is no happenstance that Mark bridges the first three eschatological agents (John, the Holy Spirit, Jesus the Messiah–King–Son of God) to the fourth *ginomai* text, the *fisher*–promise (Mark 1:17), by a summary of Jesus’ preaching: *God’s eschatological agent declares His mission, as well as the substance of the presence of the kingdom and invites followers to join in the mission.* As the first three make public the present marks of eschatological fulfillment, there is a reasonable basis to consider the same intent for the fourth *ginomai* text, namely that Mark 1:17 also refers to another eschatological agent. After setting the character introduction pattern, with its Old Testament expectation, announcing the arrival of the kingdom as the time of fulfillment, Jesus invites followers with the promise that He will make them *appear as fishers*—they will *appear* publicly as God’s eschatological agents, as have John, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus.

Although there are no direct phrase parallels in the Old Testament, various *fisher* texts are available as potential background for deciphering Jesus’ choice of the expression *fishers of men* (*halieis anthrōpōn*): Jeremiah 16:16; Ezekiel 19:4–5; 29:4–5; 38:4; Amos 4:2; Habakkuk 1:14–17. Old Testament *fisher/hunters* are presented as God’s instruments to accomplish His will, primarily through acts of judgment. Most commentators refer to these Old Testament *fisher* texts, but mostly dismiss them, because they do not fit what appears to them as Mark’s stress on positive aspects of God’s work in Jesus the Messiah. France recognizes the Old Testament metaphorical background, noting Jeremiah 16:16; Amos 4:2; Habakkuk 1:14–17, yet does not see such potential judgment in light of the Good News.<sup>19</sup> France sees rescue in the Good News, not hook or catch for judgment. But, he does not exactly explain why. Guelich notes the Old Testament background, as well, but points out that the referent “carries a negative tone of judgment,” which he deems unsuitable for Mark’s context.<sup>20</sup> Blakley, in his recent dissertation on Mark 4–8, recognizes the negative Old Testament context, but disallows for its relevance in Mark. He writes:

Yet, in all of these texts, the metaphorical deployment of fishing language and imagery (e.g., fish, fishers, nets, and hooks) occurs in contexts of judgment, which does not correspond to the Marken context with its stress on salvation.<sup>21</sup>

Others simply conclude that the background of the disciples as fisherman is sufficient for the meaning and metaphorical correspondence.<sup>22</sup>

Viewing the Marken *fishers* as positive, as a rescue, nonetheless, seems to invalidate the fishing metaphorical correspondence, for fish are not rescued—there is nothing positive for *fish–people* in the actual metaphorical correspondence. Furthermore, Lane reminds us,

To interpret this phrase only as a play on words appropriate to the situation is to fail to appreciate its biblical background and its relevance to the context, which has focused attention on God’s eschatological act in sending Jesus. In the Old Testament prophetic tradition it is God who is the fisher of men. The passages in which the image is developed are distinctively ominous in tone, stressing the divine judgment.<sup>23</sup>

Lane continues by noting the “intimate connection” between the summary verse in 1:15 and the *fisher*–promise in 1:17: The eschatological act of *fishing* is evidence of the presence of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed.<sup>24</sup> *Fishing* is the outcome of “God’s decisive action.”<sup>25</sup>

19 France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 96.

20 Guelich, *Mark 1:8:26*, Vol. 34a, 51.

21 Blakley, “Incomprehension or Resistance?,” 160.

22 Guelich, *Mark 1:8:26*, Vol. 34a, 51; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2d ed., New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1966).

23 William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972; repr 1982), 68; also see D. Rudman, “The Significance of the Phrase ‘Fishers of Men’ in the Synoptic Gospels,” *Irish Biblical Studies* 26 Issue 3 (2005): 106–118.

24 Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 68.

25 Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 68; see 1QH vv. 7–8.

Lane's observations are more aligned with both the Old Testament referents and in how Mark actually has set up his introduction. Furthermore, it makes sense that, as the first three *ginomai* texts introduce God's eschatological agents used to inaugurate the kingdom, so also does the fourth introduce similar characters: the followers/disciples who will be made *fishers*. This can be observed by how Mark introduces *the invitation-call/promise* and then how Jesus commissions His followers as an extension of His mission in Mark 3 (first and then expanded in Mark 6):

#### The invitation-call/promise/commission

Mark 1:17—Invitation/ <i>fisher</i> —promise	Mark 3:13–16—Summons/creating <i>fishers</i>
And Jesus said to them, “Come (after) me...” (1:17a, b).	And [He] summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him (3:13b).
And I will make/create ( <i>kai poiēsō</i> ) you to become fishers of men (1:17c).	And He makes/creates ( <i>kai epoiēsen</i> ) twelve... (3:14a; note 3:16a <i>kai epoiēsen tous dōdeka</i> ).

There is an obvious parallel—promise—fulfillment—crafted into Mark's narrative. In Mark 1, amid the introduction of eschatological characters that play a role in the “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” we have the invitation to follow Jesus as characters to carry out the mission of Jesus (1:14). This invitation is also cast as a promise, “I will make [*poiēsō*] you to become fishers of men.” This invitation is, then, met with fulfillment in Mark's summons in 3:13ff when He “creates [*epoiēsen*] twelve...” (v. 14a). Jesus' *fisher*—promise of 1:17 is fulfilled in the calling and commission of the twelve in chapter 3. It then follows that the content of the commission is the nature of being a *fisher*. *Fishers* are those who are “with Him” and those who are sent to preach and cast out demons.

*fishers* = those who are with Jesus (i.e., followers/disciples)

who are sent to herald [the Gospel of God, cf. 1:14ff]

and

who are sent to have authority to cast out demons

The initial narrative call or invitation to *follow after* Jesus comes immediately after the summary of Jesus' message and mission (1:14–15). The first call is, as is the whole of the introduction, an inaugural act that points to the “enactment of God's dominion.”<sup>26</sup>

Although Blakley only sees a weak connection to Old Testament *fishers*, he is correct in observing that the “appointment of the Twelve in Mark 3:13–19 is the logical progression of Jesus' promise in 1:16–20, as indicated by the verbal and thematic features shared by these two episodes.”<sup>27</sup> Jesus promises to make (*poieō*) those who “come after” Him to be *fishers*. Mark draws a correspondence between the call—promise in Mark 1:17 and the naming and commissioning in Mark 3:13ff. The narrative reveals that the Mark 3 commission is the inaugurated fulfillment of the *fisher*—promise. This is why Jesus' word in Mark 1:17 is future, a promise. So it follows that Mark 1:17 is further explained (defined) by the role and responsibilities given to the “followers” in the commission pericope in Mark 3 (and later expanded in Mark 6). The ones invited to follow in the initial call (the fourth *ginomai* text, 1:16–20) head the list of the Mark 3 commissioning of the twelve in the fulfillment of the promise to be *made* (*poiēsō*, 1:17/*epoiēsen*, 3:14, 16) *fishers*. None

<sup>26</sup> Blakley, “Incomprehension or Resistance?,” 158; Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 49–50: “...Jesus' recruitment of the fishers constitutes an inaugural—and thus momentous—step in his enactment of God's dominion.”

<sup>27</sup> Blakley, “Incomprehension or Resistance?,” 163; “Jesus' promise to make Simon and Andrew fishers of people (1:17) introduces a narrative thread of logical progression that works its way through the narrative, from the callings of James and John (1:19–20) and Levi (2:14), through the appointment of the twelve, to the commissioning and sending out of the Twelve, first to Jews (6:7–13) and then to Gentiles (6:45) (167).”

of the other Gospel writers use *poieō* (*make/create*) to characterize the calling/naming of the twelve, making it more likely that Mark wants the hearer/reader to make this narrative connection between the promise to be made *fishers* and the fulfillment in naming and commissioning of the twelve. The meaning of *fishers* in Mark 1 finds its content in the Mark 3 commission of the twelve, namely, *fishers* are those who are *with Jesus* and who, then, will be sent out to *preach* and to *have authority to cast out demons*. This is what it means to be “*made to become fishers of men*.”

### The self-evident meaning: OT *fisher* contexts shape the nature of evangelism

As with the earlier *ginomai* texts (1:4, 9, 11), the Mark 1:17 *fisher*–promise also yields evidence of an antecedent Old Testament background that fits Mark’s context. Acknowledging Mark’s Old Testament and eschatological pattern in the first set of character introductions, the *fisher*–promise should inform and shape the Church’s understanding of both the nature of discipleship and of evangelism.

Many who comment on Mark 1:17 acknowledge the seminal and exhaustingly detailed study by Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”*<sup>28</sup> published in 1967. His study examines the *fisher/hunter* and other related metaphors throughout ancient biblical and non-biblical literature. Although most acknowledge that the *fisher* imagery, as presented and surveyed by Wuellner, is used widely and carries a range of metaphorical meaning, there are analogous meanings that are particularly relevant to the Mark’s Gospel narrative. The *fisher* metaphor carries a Greco–Roman pedagogical meaning that is associated with educators, philosophers, wise men, and is explained within a “learning–teaching” context.<sup>29</sup> A philosophical teacher–student relationship as *fisher*–pupil/disciple metaphor also can be found in Ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, Christian, Rabbinic, and Greco–Roman traditions, and, as well, it occurs in cultic, prophetic, didactic, social, and cultural contexts—all of which can carry both positive and negative connotations. Additionally, Wuellner shows the *fisher* metaphor’s association with the establishment of justice, which is identified in a range of uses from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, Old Testament prophetic traditions, as well Lucian’s essay “The Fisherman.”<sup>30</sup> Any suggestion, therefore, that the metaphorical correspondence is a simple word–play with the follower’s occupation as fisherman seems rather narrow and even improbable given its wide and pervasive use in ancient biblical and non–biblical literature.

Though many define the *fishers* metaphor as a positive one, the meaning of the promise can only be deduced from the context. Those finding the Old Testament with its negative connotations an unsuitable referent, do so on the basis that such a background does not fit Mark’s context and is incongruous to the Good News, should note it is precisely that particular *fisher* metaphor—packed with the content of God’s action in sending *fishers* as described in the Old Testament—that corresponds to the introduction crafted by Mark and the Gospel narrative he develops. Even Blakley comments that “Jeremiah 16:16, which offers the closest parallel to Mark, occurs in a context in which YHWH announces judgment for Judah’s idolatry.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, it is precisely the issue of idolatry which begs the stern language from Jesus against the scribes in Mark 3 (in the Beelzubul conflict) and, as well, against those who do not have *ears to hear* the Gospel as indicated in the harsh use of the Isaiah 6 idolatry–taunt in Mark 4:10ff. The issue of idolatry is present in Mark’s narrative world.<sup>32</sup> In fact, idolatry is embedded into the contexts of the three blended Old Testament texts that provide Mark’s underlying foundation and programmatic summary of the

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28 Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men”* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967).

29 Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* 70–71.

30 Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, 59.

31 Blakley, “Incomprehension or Resistance?,” 160.

32 See “Wasted Evangelism” and my “Idolatry and Poverty: Social Action as Christian Apologetics,” *Africanus Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2 (November 2010): 24–43.

Gospel (Mark 1:2–3; cf. Isa 40:3; Exod 23:20; Mal 3:1).<sup>33</sup> How Mark has framed his introduction and crafted his narrative, then, begs the listener/reader to draw significance from the Old Testament *fisher* referents.

#### *The fisher (con)texts: Jeremiah 16, Amos 4, Habakkuk 1, Ezekiel 29, 38, Isaiah 37*

The Old Testament *fisher* concept carries a connotation of God's judgment—*fishers* are God's agents of judgment, given the authority to carry out God's will to judge injustice and to establish His sovereignty and rule over the realm of humankind. What is overlooked by most commenting on the Marken *fisher* text is that the concentration of judgment throughout these texts (Jer 16:16; Amos 4:1–2; cf. Hab 1:14–15; Ezek 29:4–5; 38:4; Isa 37:29) draws the reader/hearer back to covenantal obedience, avoiding idolatry, and identification with the economically vulnerable.

The closest and, perhaps, the primary referent for Mark is the Jeremiah *fisher* text where the prophet announces:

“Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,” declares the Lord, “and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks” (Jer 16:16).

The obvious reason for God's *fisher*—agents of judgment was the people had become idolatrous:

“Then you are to say to them, ‘It is because your forefathers have forsaken Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law. You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart,<sup>34</sup> without listening to Me. So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known’” (Jer 16:11–13).

The flow of thought in Jeremiah, where the prophet is the initial *agent of judgment* (Jer 15–19), contains numerous references to idolatry (including God vs. the gods tauntologies) as a cause/effect for God's judgment:

“I will first doubly repay<sup>35</sup> their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

O LORD, my strength and my stronghold,  
And my refuge in the day of distress,  
To You the nations will come  
From the ends of the earth and say,  
“Our fathers have inherited nothing but falsehood,  
Can man make gods for himself?  
Yet they are not gods!  
“Therefore behold, I am going to make them know—  
This time I will make them know  
My power and My might;  
And they shall know that My name is the LORD” (Jer 16:18–21).<sup>36</sup>

“Yet they did not listen or incline their ears,

33 “Wasted Evangelism.”

34 Stubbornness = reference to being an idolater; see G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 124–125.

35 Interestingly, the “doubly repay” reference is also found in Isaiah 40:2, further linking the programmatic summary in Mark's opening verses to the eschatological nature of the *fisher*—promise.

36 Cf. Jer 17:2.

but stiffened their necks in order not to listen or take correction" (Jer 17:23).<sup>37</sup>

"For My people have forgotten Me,  
They burn incense to worthless gods  
And they have stumbled from their ways,  
From the ancient paths,  
To walk in bypaths,  
Not on a highway" (Jer 18:15).

In the midst of the references to idolatry are reminders—direct and indirect—of the covenant stipulations concerning the poor. In Jeremiah 16–18, those who refuse to provide and advocate for the economically vulnerable will become subject to *sword* and *famine*, becoming *childless*, that is *widows* and *orphans* (Exod 22:24; cf. Ps 109):

"They will die of deadly diseases, they will not be lamented or buried; they will be as dung on the surface of the ground and come to an end by **sword and famine**, and their carcasses will become food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth" (Jer 16:4).

Therefore, give their **children over to famine**<sup>38</sup>  
And deliver them up to the power of the sword;  
And let their wives become childless and widowed.  
Let their men also be smitten to death,  
Their young men struck down by the **sword** in battle (Jer 18:21).

These consequences are reminiscent of covenant expectations and threats:

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any **widow** or **orphan**. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the **sword**, and your wives shall become **widows** and your children **fatherless** (Exod 22:21–24).<sup>39</sup>

Cursed is he who distorts the **justice due an alien, orphan, and widow**. And all the people shall say, "Amen" (Deut 27:19).

Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away. The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you **cannot be healed**. The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart (Deut 28:26–28).<sup>40</sup>

The identification of *fishers* as a means of judgment is also found in Amos 4:1–2, narrowing the focus of judgment specifically to those oppressing the economically vulnerable:

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria,  
**Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,**  
Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!"  
The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness,  
"Behold, the days are coming upon you

37 Reference to *not listening ears* draws similarities to Isaiah 6 idol-taunt and *stiffened their necks* pulls the listener back to the original golden-cow-worship in Exodus (See Beale, *Worship*, 82; note fn. 30).

38 Cf., the curse of famine, Deut 32:24.

39 Cf. Exod 23:9; Lev 19:33–34; 25:35; Deut 1:16; 10:18–19; 15:9; 27:19; 24:17–18; Job 34:28; 35:9; Pss 10:14, 17–18; 68:5; 109:2–9; Prov 23:10–11; Jer 7:6–7; Zech 7:10.

40 Note, *cursed* for serving other gods, Deut 28:14; also, the curses are reminiscent of plagues on Egypt's gods.

When they will take you away with meat hooks,  
And the last of you with **fish hooks**" (Amos 4:1–2).

The reference here draws upon the cause of God's judgment, namely affluent ladies of the Northern Kingdom who are oppressing the poor. The mention of *cows of Bashan* could be a pun related to idolatry (*cow* draws us back to the original idol–calves, Exod 32) and pinpoints the idolatry to wanton wealth accumulation without concern for its effect (as implied in the exuberant, sarcastic comment "to bring on the drinks!"), specifically implying covenant breaking in oppressing/defrauding the poor.

Amos 4:1–2 is part of a thread that links covenantal unfaithfulness and misshapen values of wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor:

Thus says the LORD,  
"For three transgressions of Israel and for four  
I will not revoke its punishment,  
Because they sell the righteous for money  
And the **needy** for a pair of sandals.

These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of **the helpless**  
Also turn aside the way of the humble;  
And a man and his father resort to the same girl  
In order to profane My holy name" (Amos 2:6–7).

Therefore because you impose heavy rent on **the poor**  
And exact a tribute of grain from them,  
Though you have built houses of well-hewn stone,  
Yet you will not live in them;  
You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.  
For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great,  
You who distress the righteous and accept bribes  
And turn aside **the poor** in the gate (Amos 5:11–12).<sup>41</sup>

Hear this, you who trample **the needy**, to do away with the humble of the land, saying,  
"When will the new moon be over,  
So that we may sell grain,  
And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market,  
To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger,  
And to cheat with dishonest scales,  
So as to buy **the helpless** for money  
And **the needy** for a pair of sandals,  
And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?" (Amos 8:4–6).

This thread points to those who have security and power and yet prevent the economically vulnerable to escape out of prolonged poverty, disregarding justice for the economically vulnerable "at the gate." The call to follow Jesus implies a *fisher*–discipleship and evangelism that are associated with the covenant expectations toward the poor and the consequences of idolatrous patterns of social life.

Similar language is used in Habakkuk 1 and Ezekiel 29, where the imagery of *fishing* is a tool of judgment. This, too, has an apologetic nature: Ultimately this judgment activity of God will

<sup>41</sup> Note Amos 5:10. The *poor in the gate* refers, not to the poor who "hang" at the city gate, but the role of the leadership who are "at the city gate" who were responsible for legislatively applying the covenant stipulations, the place where the poor were to go for presenting their case. The Amos context implies that *the poor* were not getting their justice by the municipal leadership/elders and the injustice was related to the economic well-being of those whose land was not returned as the Sabbath laws commanded, but were subject to *heavy rent*, and thus continuous/prolonged poverty.

reveal that He alone is LORD (cf. Jer 16:21) and, through this revelation, God will make Himself known in the sight of many nations (cf. Ezek 38:23). In Habakkuk, it is through the *fish*ing activity that the ungodly, the unrighteous, and those who oppose God are gathered together for judgment (cf. Hab 1:14–15). The judgment passages that utilize *fish*ing imagery also promise a future remnant (through God’s *fisher*–agents of judgment) that returns/restores the outcomes of covenant stipulations, offering a reasonable correspondence to the remnant theme developed throughout Mark’s narrative.

### ***The inaugurated kingdom and its agents of judgment: Implications for discipleship***

As Mark has set up the eschatological framework to introduce pivotal characters in his Gospel, the reference to the fishing metaphor links Jesus’ *followers* to prophetic threads that present “God’s apocalyptic rectifications of the world,” which are carried out through Israel and other various *authorized* agents that involve both redemption and accompanying judgment.<sup>42</sup> The above survey of Old Testament material and threads indicates that within the promise–fulfillment/expectation–consummation pattern there is an underlying eschatological framework that includes judgment regarding the issues of poverty that effect the economically vulnerable. It is not whether we like that connection or not, but what significance it has for Christian discipleship and potential evangelistic outcomes?

The pattern set by Mark in his character introductions through the four *ginomai* texts help to give an eschatological connotation to Jesus’ *fisher*–promise in Mark 1:17. This view is strengthened in that the call to follow appears immediately after the summary announcement concerning the Gospel of God (Mark 1:14–15). This is then followed by “the launch” of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Mark 1:21–3:12),<sup>43</sup> which aligns the disciples’ initial call and the description of their *fisher* character role “with Jesus’ own mission.”<sup>44</sup> Jesus’ invitation to *come after Me* (1:17b) and the *fisher*–promise connect the *fisher* role to the in–breaking of God’s rule. Everything about Mark’s introduction points to the Old Testament and its *fisher* contexts, identifying “Jesus’ imperative as a call to eschatological holy war.”<sup>45</sup>

When Jesus invited followers, He promised to make them *fishers of men*. There is a direct correlation between the promise in 1:17 and the commission in 3:13ff, specifically marked by the repeated use of *poieō* (create/make), often translated *appointed*, *ordained*, *chose*, which can mask the reference back to the *fisher*–promise. There should be little doubt, therefore, that, as Jesus makes the *fisher*–promise (1:17), the narrative links the Old Testament *fisher* metaphor to the role followers are to play in inaugurating the kingdom (i.e., expanding the influence of the Gospel). The Old Testament background offers a reasonable place to discover the meaning—Old Testament *fishers* were God’s authorized agents to demonstrate His rule, challenge idolatry, and to ameliorate injustice. *Fishers* were used, not in a narrow sense of judgment, but in its full definition, namely, as God’s active agents against oppressors and their systems that oppress. *Fishers* were utilized to demonstrate God’s sovereignty as He moved over the realms of humankind to bring about His purposes, gathering people for judgment in order to establish His ends (in both punishment and restoration). Considering the wider context, it is fair, therefore, to expand and offer the following exegetical idea for the presentation of the *fisher*–promise in Mark’s Gospel:

*Come after Me and I will make you appear in history as God’s agents of judgment who actively pursue the outcomes that reflect the inauguration of My Kingdom.*

As the commission in Mark 3 indicates, this is exactly what happens and God appoints His

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42 Note Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* 123.

43 At the end of this “launch” segment, Mark closes, ironically, with a demon recognizing that Jesus was indeed “the Son of God,” drawing the reader’s attention back to chapter 1, v. 1, “Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” the subject of the story.

44 Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 48.

45 *Ibid.*, 56.

followers to be His eschatological agents, agents of judgment that are to establish His Kingdom among humanity. To narrow the *fisher*–promise to just verbal witnessing truncates it and misses the broader implications of the inauguration of the rule and reign of God. The Old Testament explains the content of God’s rule is both salvific (as in bringing people to Christ) and in calling the realms of humankind to reflect the justice of God’s Kingdom. The *fisher*–promise is not to draw *followers* to a narrow activity of simply “witnessing,” but defines them and gives them eschatological significance for activities that are consistent with Mark’s thematic and programmatic understanding of the nature and content of the Gospel–Kingdom that is inaugurated with the appearance of Jesus, the Messiah–Son of God, and the coming of the Spirit.

Suzanne Henderson begins her book on *Discipleship* pointing out that in Mark’s Gospel, more than the others, Jesus is always and everywhere in the company of His disciples.<sup>46</sup> Invited and then commissioned by Jesus, the disciples “repeatedly bear witness to activities that characterize his early mission.” They are “more than mere bystanders,” benefiting from Jesus’ private counsel and teaching; they actively participate in demonstrating that God’s dominion has broken into the realms of humankind, through proclamation, confronting the demonic, and in healing.<sup>47</sup>

Becoming *fishers* is not the call, but the outcome of the call to be followers. The significance of the *fisher* text in Mark is suited for making application relevant to the implications of the Old Testament judgment texts, which include promise of exile and societal destruction (i.e., curse) and promise of remnant and social restoration in the likeness of God’s design (i.e., blessing and salvation). The *fisher* metaphor is appropriate, not just narrowly for individual, private salvation, but more broadly for applications, activities, and outcomes of social action and justice, as well.

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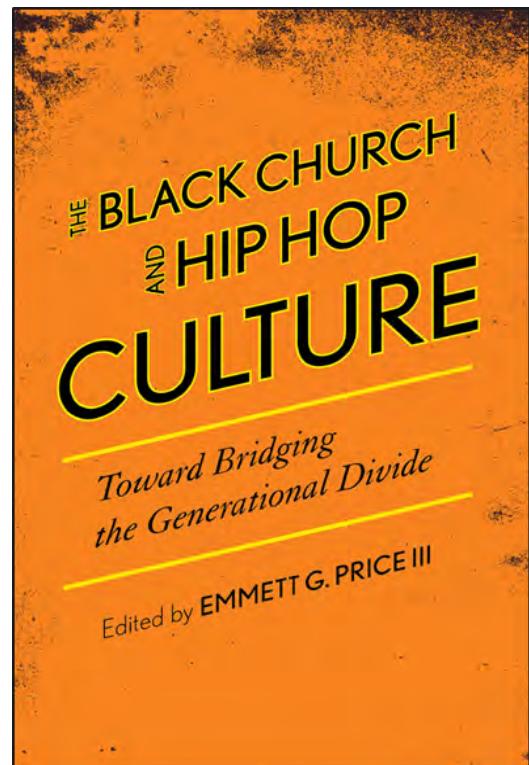
<sup>46</sup> Henderson (*Christology and Discipleship*, 3) referencing Etienne Trocmé, *The Foundation of the Gospel According to Mark* (trans. P. Gaughan: Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 142.

<sup>47</sup> Henderson, *Christology and Discipleship*, 3; also note, “The gospel’s opening call to discipleship (Mark 1:16–20) will serve as a critical launching point for examining the intended function of ‘following Jesus’ in the second gospel” (Henderson, 32–33).

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Emmett G. Price III is Associate Professor of Music and former department chair of African American Studies at Northeastern University in Boston. He is author of *Hip Hop Culture* (2006) and executive editor of the *Encyclopedia of African American Music* (2011). [www.emmettprice.com](http://www.emmettprice.com).

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# Counseling Jewish Intercultural Families: A Christian Approach

GARRETT SMITH

Rachel, a Jewish atheist, went along with her Christian fiancé, John, to church. They asked to see me for some pastoral counseling about their interfaith relationship. During counseling, Rachel said, she liked attending John's church, but insisted she could never be a Christian. "We Jews believe in one God, not three," she explained. John looked at his wife-to-be in bewilderment, "What do you mean 'we Jews believe in one God?'" he asked, "You're an atheist." Rachel opened her mouth to respond, then paused, confused by her own statement. She had just defended a God she didn't even believe in. Yet, for reasons Rachel couldn't articulate, the prospect of Christian conversion evoked a visceral loyalty to her latent Jewishness.

What happened here? Was Rachel just being a hypocrite? Actually, she was not being inconsistent. For Rachel, the Jewish belief in one God was not a personal belief but a cultural identifier. Neither she nor John had seriously considered the difference. Both failed to grasp the hidden assumptions each held about the other's background, and they had neglected to confront such challenging questions as What is faith? What is religion? What is culture? And, more importantly, how do they interact?

Today, approximately half of all Jewish people are marrying non-Jews. Increasingly, these couples can be found in churches and in Christian counseling offices. How can we, as Christians, help these marriages and families? And what are the opportunities and cautions about sharing the gospel with them?

The purpose of this article is to help pastors and Christian counselors better understand the nature of Jewish-Christian relationships, to provide an approach to counseling them, and to show how the gospel can be shared in an attractive way. This article's contents are taken largely from my thesis that was submitted to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry degree in marriage and family counseling. Throughout the article, Jewish-Christian marriages will be described as "intercultural" marriages, rather than as "interfaith" marriages. The term "interfaith," though more common, is less accurate — it suggests that the principal difference between partners is belief. In fact, the primary conflict is usually culture.

## Culture and religion

Helping couples understand how culture and faith are different — and how they intersect in religion is critical. Religion contains a large cultural component, which can be found in communal belonging, rituals, family traditions, music, food, and language, among other things. These cultural components may or may not be connected to the spirituality and faith of that religious community. An individual may be strongly impacted by the culture of the religious community in which he or she was raised, but may not adhere to religious beliefs and practices.

The relationship between Ellen and Rob exemplifies the confusion between faith and culture. Ellen, an evangelical Christian woman, couldn't understand why the family of her Jewish fiancé wanted so badly for her to convert to Judaism. They didn't appear to care very much about God or the beliefs of Judaism. What Ellen failed to realize is that the family's desire had little to do with faith. They wanted her to become Jewish, and to raise her and Rob's children as Jews, in order to preserve an ethnic community. By contrast, Ellen's desire for Rob to believe in Jesus had everything to do with faith and nothing to do with his becoming a Gentile.

For the counselor, the challenge was to help Rob and Ellen see there were options besides one

becoming “Jewish” or the other becoming “Christian.” Eventually, Ellen and Rob realized they could share a belief in Jesus and still maintain Jewish traditions, culture, and identity for their children.

For Jewish intercultural families, there are certain sets of questions that frequently come up and often cause conflict. And when options are limited and unappealing, couples can feel discouraged. Does one spouse convert to the other’s religion? Then whoever makes that sacrifice may feel resentful, or just out of place. Do children just attend services with one of the parents? Is the best option to avoid conflict simply to have no involvement in religious activities? This is often dissatisfying as well, because the couple often wants children to experience aspects of both traditions and upbringing. The challenge is to get the couple to realize there are more options. The author has found it helpful for a couple to expand its thinking about and options for family religious and culture decisions in five different areas: identity, community, faith, traditions, and extended family. By answering these questions, a family may be able to find more satisfying and helpful options for family enrichment. Each of these areas will be discussed.

Identity	How do we want our child to think of him or herself?
Community	What religious community, if any, will we be a part of?
Faith	What do we believe and how will we practice that with our family?
Traditions	What traditions will we practice in our home?
Extended Family	How will we relate to our extended families?

*Figure 1. Decision Grid for Jewish Intercultural Families.*

**Identity.** Parents need to grapple with the question of their children’s self-identity. Would they hope their children, when asked, would say, “I am Jewish” or “I am half-Jewish” or “I am Korean” or “Jewish on my dad’s side” or “Christian” or “Jewish Christian,” etc.? Parents cannot control how their children will eventually think of themselves, but they need to have a conversation to talk practically about how they will raise their children. Perhaps the most important aspect of that conversation will be to simply gain an understanding of each other’s thoughts and feelings about their own identities and aspirations for their children.

Identity is fiercely held within the Jewish community. On surveys, the top Jewish concerns always are anti-Semitism and assimilation (Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1995). The history of the Jewish people is filled with persecution. Most Jewish families in the United States either immigrated as a result of the pogroms of Eastern Europe and Russia, or the Holocaust. Jewish people are proudly an historical anomaly in being a people, at times, without a land and without even a common language (because conversational Hebrew was developed relatively recently). They did not and still do not assimilate into the cultures of the nations where they live. Jewish people remain as a distinct people group even though they have existed within many different nations and cultures over the past 2,000 years. The fear of assimilation within the Jewish community is that, if they assimilate into a culture, they will slowly cease to exist as a distinct people. In a conversation with the author, a member of the Jewish Community called assimilation, “the quiet holocaust,” in that assimilation results in the destruction of the Jewish people. This is one of the reasons for a resistance to marrying outside the Jewish community, because of fear that intermarrying will lead to assimilation.

Individual Jewish people are often confused about their own identity, feeling in one sense both consciously and unconsciously that their Jewishness is what makes them unique and distinct within a Christian nation, yet confused as to what it means when they do not choose to be involved with the Jewish community or religion. This is a pressure Jewish intercultural families may feel acutely, especially since, in the eyes of many within the Jewish community, a Jewish person has broken a

taboo by marrying a non-Jew. The identity pressure can come from both the Jewish partner and his or her family, but also from the non-Jewish partner who is often confused as to the nature and intensity of Jewish identity.

It is important for a counselor to help Jewish intercultural couples explore these issues of identity. Similar concerns of identity will also exist in the non-Jewish family to some extent as well. Christian denominations also have varying degrees of cultural and communal identity.

**Community.** Every family must make a choice as to what religious community, if any, it will want to be a part of. Generally, if one member of the couple converts to the religion of the other, that person is making the decision about what religious community the family is going to be a part of. They may not necessarily be making a decision about what they believe, but they are making a decision in what religious community they as a family are going to be a part. When there is not a conversion, this question becomes more difficult. There are many options. A family could decide that it will not belong to any religious community, or it may decide loosely to expose the children to small parts of both communities. If the parents decide to be involved with a religious community, they will need to decide the involvement of the non-adherent member of the family. For example, will the Jewish father attend church or church events (like a meal or if the children are in a play) with the family, or will he simply stay at home as the mother takes the children to church, or how will a non-Jewish mother be involved in the synagogue? Will her involvement need to be limited because of her differences?

**Faith.** As indicated previously, being involved in a religious community and/or identifying oneself with a particular religion does not necessarily imply what one actually believes. Religions can take on more of a communal identity. This is especially true in the Jewish world. It is fully acceptable to be Jewish and to be an atheist. One Jewish atheist, when asked why he said the *shema* each morning ("Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And Thou shalt love the Lord thy God...", Deut 6:4-8, JPS) and practiced as an Orthodox Jew, explained he considered the *shema* like a pledge of allegiance to the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

There can be as wide a spectrum of beliefs and adherence to "doctrinal" religious beliefs for Jewish people as for those raised in Christian communities. Spouses need to be encouraged to get beyond what Christianity or Judaism teaches and be honest with one another about what they really believe and how they understand their spirituality. Furthermore, they need to make consequential decisions about how they want to raise their children. How do they want to practice their faith(s) in the home? Will they pray with their children before meals or bed? Will they talk about God at home, or read the Bible? And how much of it will they read?

One Christian woman converted to Judaism because of how important it was to her spouse and his family. She enjoyed the Jewish traditions and community, but, when she had her first child, she had a crisis, realizing how important her faith in Jesus was and that she had to share her belief in Jesus with her child and was now uncertain about raising her in a synagogue which didn't believe in Jesus. She later insisted on her daughter attending church as well as synagogue.

**Traditions.** One of the easiest first steps for spouses in the process of navigating family cultural and religious decisions is deciding what traditions they are going to keep as a family in their home. For example, will they have a Christmas tree and/or Chanukah menorah? Will they have a crèche? What about Easter eggs or Passover? How will the house be decorated at these times? This is one of the easiest areas for a couple to negotiate for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the issues are more tangible and physical, unlike issues of identity, for instance. And secondly, what makes this an easy area for spouses to isolate, is that they most likely have been forced to begin making these decisions already, because the holidays have come and gone in their relationship and they have had

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<sup>1</sup> Garrett R. Smith, *Comfortably Jewish: Practical Ways to Enjoy Your Family Heritage* (San Francisco, CA: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2010), 14.

to compromise on them already. They may have discovered that they are able to find compromises, which can give them courage as they face the more difficult areas of decision-making. They may also have resentment and frustration over the decisions they have made, which may have even sparked some of the intercultural conflict to begin with.

This can be a fruitful exploration in counseling to help them better grasp what was difficult or frustrating. As part of this conversation, a goal would be to help them better understand for themselves and for their partners those aspects of the traditions that are more important to each of them personally, and also those traditions of the other which may be culturally difficult to accept. For example, a Jewish person may actually enjoy a Christmas tree, but find a nativity scene disconcerting. This may seem inconsistent to the Christian partner. But a counselor can help them consider that many Jewish people, who were not reared very religiously and never went to synagogue, only faced their Jewishness in December as they were the children who “did not celebrate Christmas” or “believe in Jesus.” Thus, the nativity scene, because it includes the person of Jesus, may create emotional difficulties and issues of identity for a Jewish person, while the Christmas tree, which is essentially a beautiful decoration without a necessary religious connotation, actually fills a longing she or he always had. One may have felt left out not having a Christmas tree, yet have a sense of fear or confusion when seeing a nativity scene. I remember one Jewish woman was actually very excited about getting her first Christmas tree with her non-Jewish spouse for just this reason, but she still remained very uncomfortable around any mention of Jesus.

Counseling can be helpful to the Jewish person both to discover her own conflicted feelings, and give the partner more insight and understanding. Conversely, the Christian partner can consider for himself and explain to his Jewish partner what the various elements of tradition mean to him and determine his level of personal importance.

One exercise is for the couple to talk specifically about its traditions as children around the December holidays. They can identify those traditions they enjoyed the most and would want for their own children as well as traditions they did not celebrate, but perhaps would want for their children. Finally, spouses could make a plan for how they would like, as a family, to celebrate the December holidays. They could then do the same for the Easter/Passover season and other holidays. The process is intended to help them better discover why certain traditions are meaningful and important to them, and why certain traditions of each spouse may be particularly difficult for the other.

**Extended family.** Regardless of the choices the family makes about how to practice their culture and faith in their home, they still must make decisions about how they will relate to their extended families. A number of potential issues arise. To what extent will the children be involved with their grandparents' religious practices and traditions? For example, will they go to church or synagogue with them? Will they have a *bris* or baptism? How will decisions as a family affect the way the children will feel around their cousins? Will one set of grandparents feel like outsiders from the traditions of their children? What about when the extended family feels resentment or chooses intentionally to exclude them from family functions? One Jewish/Catholic couple's daughter was not allowed to be a flower girl like her cousins at her aunt's wedding because she was not being raised Catholic.

Spouses need to recognize how the decisions they make will affect their relationship with their extended families, and they need to think through how each are going to relate to their extended family and be involved specifically in the religious traditions of each extended family. For example, one Jewish writer suggested that, if an “interfaith couple” decided to raise its children Jewish, it should be sure to spend non-religious holidays like the Fourth of July or Thanksgiving with its non-Jewish family.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, as well, if a family has decided to make church their primary community,

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<sup>2</sup> Paula Brody, “A Very Difficult Thing to Do: Telling Your Parents You are Raising Your Children in Your Partner’s

it should make a special effort to spend Jewish holidays with its Jewish family. Both of these suggestions help the extended family to feel more included and valued.

A counselor can also use these five areas to help married partners understand what is happening in their relationship. For instance, for one couple, the husband felt very strongly about having their child baptized, which confused his wife, because he had never cared about religion before. By using this grid, he was able to discover that his desire stemmed not from convictions about beliefs, or even a desire to be part of a church community, but rather because of the strong connections baptism had to areas of tradition, extended family, and his sense of identity.

By breaking out the decisions into these five areas, a couple can more easily understand the issues that are at stake and find where the areas of conflict or unidentified hurt may exist. Also by discovering what each finds most important, they may also find that where they thought there were irreconcilable differences, there was a way to compromise.

### Finding a unified belief in Jesus

One reason it is very important to break out the issues of culture and faith from a specifically Christian point of view is for the couple to see better the possibility for a unified faith and belief system. An assumption that makes Christian counseling distinct from non-Christian counseling is its biblical viewpoint. A foundational biblical view of the world finds a universal need and value for each person to come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Dealing with Jewish intercultural couples presents a number of theological questions in terms of approach from a Christian pastoral counseling point of view. A Christian believes in the importance of faith in Jesus and in the value of the Holy Spirit's ability to work to create marital health and unity for the couple. If this is the case, how does the counselor theologically approach counseling a couple that is not receptive to hearing about Jesus? What if a Jewish person is specifically hostile to hearing about Jesus? What if the couple is "unequally yoked" in that one of them is a follower of Jesus and the other (most commonly the Jewish one) is not? What is the correct approach to this marriage? Or what is the approach if that couple is considering marriage? These are questions, which every Christian counselor or pastor must ask, and because they are intrinsic to the approach of this article, it is important that they be dealt with explicitly. The questions will be handled in the order in which they were presented above.

Perhaps the best way to approach these questions is to think in terms of theological principles a pastor or Christian counselor will draw on. Firstly, God created marriage and family to be enjoyed by all people. It is part of God's general revelation and operates apart from any specific faith or obedience to God and every individual regardless of faith is made in the image of God and precious to God. Therefore, the counselor should always work for the strengthening and stability of any marriage or family, regardless of the personal faith of the individuals involved.

Secondly, it is not a Christian's responsibility, even an evangelist's, to convert anyone; rather it is to make the gospel available. A counselor can shower a couple with God's grace and show them how their faith can affect their marriage (along with other counseling advice as well). But that sharing comes with a freedom that recognizes the response to the gospel is ultimately between God and the couple. Even Jesus healed ten lepers and saw only one come back to give glory to God (Luke 17:11-19). Christian counselors can feel that same freedom to be open about who they are, what they believe, and what they think is best for the marriage, yet need never to push, or coerce, or insist on conversion or pursuit of faith from the couple. This is also important in dealing with children in any family. The parents may be believers in Jesus, but the children may not be.

Thirdly, in dealing with the Jewish person within an intercultural family, it is important that

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Faith," *The Guide to Jewish Interfaith Family Life: An Interfaithfamily.com Handbook*, eds. Ronnie Friedland & Edmund Case (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001), 55.

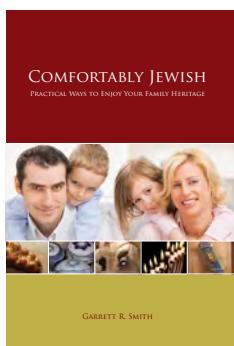
a Christian counselor accepts that the gospel is for Jewish people as well as non-Jewish people (Rom 1:16). Some have taught that Jewish people have a way to God apart from Jesus, but this is not a biblical perspective. However, at the same time, a counselor needs to recognize that most Jewish people do not believe in Jesus and may have even been taught specifically they would be a traitor to their people if they did. Therefore, a Christian counselor must work in an especially sensitive fashion, exercising sensitivity in language, working to help the Jewish person feel safe and understood. It is important for the counselor to help the couple recognize the difference between faith and culture so the Jewish person and their non-Jewish partner can understand that to follow Jesus is not a denial of being "Jewish." It is important they understand their decision as a faith decision, and not one of family and culture.

Finally, in a situation where a couple is unequally yoked (that is where one member of the couple is a believer in Jesus and one is not), divorce is never encouraged. However, the believer has not sinned if the unbeliever refuses to live with them (1Cor 7:15). Counselors in this situation must do their best to help both members of the marriage understand how their different faiths are impacting their marriage, without pressuring the unbeliever to change. It is important especially in a specifically "Christian" counseling situation to recognize that there may exist a significant inequity of trust. For example, the Jewish member of the family may not trust or feel confident seeing a pastor or Christian counselor. Counselors may have to take special care to show they are balanced, fair, and understanding. If the couple is not married but is considering marriage, it is the pastor or counselor's responsibility to help both to see the impending problems they will be facing and the ramifications with their families and future family as well as the ramifications in their pursuit of faith.

### Conclusion

Increasingly, pastors and Christian counselors are having opportunities to minister to Jewish intercultural couples. The potential for an effective ministry can be greatly increased by having a good understanding of the dynamics of the way culture and faith may be operating in that couple and to be able to help that couple see the options they have as a family. The present author's desire is in particular that, through a better understanding of what it means to be Jewish, more pastors and counselors can be equipped more fully to help the Jewish people come to believe in Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Garrett R. Smith is the founder of *Celebrate Life*, an outreach to Jewish people in Boston, and also the director of spiritual formation and outreach at Newton Presbyterian Church. Smith served as a missionary with Jews for Jesus for 12 years. He is the author of *Comfortably Jewish: Practical Ways to Enjoy Your Family Heritage* (2010). He lives in Watertown, MA with his wife and three children.



*Comfortably Jewish: Practical Ways to Enjoy Your Family Heritage.* If being Jewish is important to you and you want to pass on a sense of meaningful Jewishness to your kids, *Comfortably Jewish* shares stories and practical tips on everything from children's activities to sampling Jewish food to celebrating the holidays. A must-have resource for families who want to enjoy the Jewish side of life!



Left to right: D.Min. students  
Deanna Bridges and Rev. Laura Nelson

“IT’S A HUGE HELP TO  
SHARE LIKE JOURNEYS,  
DIFFICULTIES, JOYS  
AND STRUGGLES.”



Right: Dr. David Currie  
(Director of the  
D.Min. Program) with  
D.Min. student Tim  
Philabaum



Laura Nelson and Deanna Bridges are two very different people discovering that learning together can be a great asset.

Both are pursuing a D.Min. in Pastoral Skills: Pastor as Preacher, Caregiver and Person. Deanna leads a ministry to Boston's inner city teens. She needed deeper training and the credentials to work with local officials to secure services for the young people. "I have gained a wealth of knowledge just listening to fellow students talk about their trials and accomplishments," she says. "Now I know what to watch out for, and what I want for my position as pastor to the youth."

Laura, a senior pastor from British Columbia, wanted to improve her pastoral skills. She benefited immediately from the insights of classmates when a suicidal parishioner sought help. "Because we had talked about this as a class I knew some of the steps to take," she observes. "...As pastors, we're part of a unique world. It's a huge help to share like journeys, difficulties, joys and struggles. Even if you're from a different nationality, there's a commonality."

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## Review of *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Gospels & Acts* (second edition) by David Wenham and Steve Walton (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011)

JENNIFER CREAMER

The aim of *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Gospels & Acts* is to survey the biblical texts, as well as related scholarly matters. It is written primarily as a textbook for introductory courses taught at the undergraduate or seminary level. The authors bring considerable teaching experience to their work. David Wenham is tutor of New Testament at Trinity College, Bristol, having formerly taught at Oxford University for many years. Steve Walton is professor of New Testament at London School of Theology.

The book begins with a description of the historical and Jewish setting of the New Testament. The next two sections introduce various aspects of higher criticism and modern scholarship—including source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, narrative criticism, the hypothetical Q-source, and the quest for the historical Jesus. The final chapters provide an overview of the Gospels and Acts. Each chapter concludes with essay suggestions and further reading lists. This second edition has added “Focus on theology” insets, as well as bibliographic updates.

There is much helpful introductory information within this volume. The overview of the historical and religious contexts of the New Testament in the first chapters is clear and concise. The basic guidelines for how to approach the biblical text give a starting point for study. Throughout the discussion of modern scholarship, the synthesis of secondary material frequently results in lists representing both sides of an argument. There are also many insightful comments on the biblical text, particularly when the subject matter finally turns to the book-by-book study of the Gospels and Acts.

The reader encounters many pages of scholarly discussion before meeting the Scriptures themselves in full context. The book-by-book presentation of the Gospels and Acts begins only on page 201. Students may benefit by reading the last five chapters first.

While *Exploring the New Testament* often argues vigorously in favor of the historical accuracy of particular texts, it stops short of affirming a Bible without error. This is seen most clearly, perhaps, in its treatment of Luke. Luke’s prologue is described as an affirmation of “his historical ambitions and methods” (128). The authors continue, “This may be formal, and not actually achieved, but in Luke’s second volume, Acts, he achieves some remarkable historical accuracy” (129). Regarding the date of Quirinius’ census (Luke 2:1-4), which is said to have occurred in A.D. 6 rather than at the time of Jesus’ birth (as Luke indicates), the authors conclude that Luke writes with “a historical interest, whether or not he is accurate . . .” (154)—even after previously listing several possible explanations for the apparent discrepancy (126). Following a discussion of his possible sources, Luke is described as “a creative writer who brings stories together—and rewrites them” (252). A fuller discussion of the Gospels representing eyewitness accounts would have been helpful. Generally, the Gospel accounts are viewed as having only “substantial accuracy” (129). Not all readers will agree.

Overall, *Exploring the New Testament* is as much about exploring issues of contemporary scholarly debate as it is about exploring the text of the Gospels and Acts. It is well written in many respects, but does not affirm inerrancy. Readers will need to look elsewhere for more complete arguments in favor of historical reliability. Nonetheless, it is a readable introduction to matters related to both text and scholarship.

Jennifer has taught biblical studies with the University of the Nations in various international locations. She is currently studying for her doctorate in New Testament at North-West University and is a member of the Africanus Guild.

## Review of *The Conclusion of Luke-Acts: The Significance of Acts 28:16-31* by Charles B. Puskas (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2009)

BENJAMIN FUNG

*The Conclusion of Luke-Acts: The Significance of Acts 28:16-31* is originally a doctoral dissertation wherein the author examines the many debates and controversies over Acts 28:16-31, such as *inter alia*, its themes, its abrupt ending, its possible parallels with other passages in Luke, and the historical accuracy of its account (e.g., some scholars believe that the Roman Jews should already have heard about Paul before his arrival at Rome because of the religious controversy he had caused in the Jewish world, but verse 21 mentions that the Roman Jews are ignorant of Paul. Therefore, the author expresses doubt whether the facts mentioned in this verse are historically accurate [12]). Charles B. Puskas has teaching experience in colleges and universities and is the author of several books, including *An Introduction to the New Testament* and *Letters of Paul: An Introduction*.

The book has four chapters followed by a conclusion chapter. The first chapter serves as a brief introduction to the various scholarly debates over Acts 28:16-31, its unsettled literary and thematic issues, and a description of the author's approach to resolve the issues identified, which includes composition criticism and narrative criticism (30). Chapter 2 is a study of the literary forms and structure of this passage and provides a background for chapter 3, in which the author discusses the passage's literary, structural, and thematic relationship with other passages in Luke. Chapter 4 explains the Acts passage's literary function and theological significance. In conclusion, Puskas argues that Acts 28:16-31 "is primarily concerned with defending Paul and his mission, by presenting him as one like Jesus who does the work of Jesus" (30).

Puskas tackles quite a number of issues in a short book of only 140 pages. He gives a thorough introduction to the different debates over Acts 28:16-31 and is very helpful to those who want to study the passage. Puskas' presentation is systematic and concise, and he has brought to the table many insightful comments, particularly on the literary forms and the structure of the passage, and on the comparison of Acts 28:16-31 with other passages by Luke. For example, he has done a very detailed comparison of his pericope with Acts 21-26 and finds many commonalities between them in many different areas (64-73).

Although Puskas does strive to present clearly the different scholarly debates, his studies and his views, some may find *The Conclusion of Luke-Acts* difficult to digest because the author has tried to tackle too many issues at the same time. Also, readers should be aware that the author has tried to advance some controversial approaches towards interpreting some verses of the passage. For example, Puskas seems to support the argument that the passages in Acts which are narrated in first person plural forms (the so-called "we" passages) are merely a literary device "used by the Lukan author to identify his reader/auditors more intimately with the life and travels of Paul in the narrative" (34), rather than the biblical author's eye-witness reports (20, 34-35). Some readers may find it hard to agree, particularly when Puskas only quotes secondary sources to support his view and has not addressed the question, why, if this is the case, a similar literary style is not employed by the Lukan author of the Gospel.

Nonetheless, *The Conclusion of Luke-Acts* is a helpful book for understanding all the different scholarly debates over Acts 28:16-31 and the literary forms and the structure of this passage.

Benjamin Fung has taught New Testament Survey as an adjunct professor for the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts in 2009 and was the sole pastor of the Greater Boston Chinese Alliance Church from June 2010 to May 2012. He is also a certified public accountant in the U.S.A. He is currently studying for his doctorate in New Testament at North-West University of South Africa and is a member of the Africanus Guild.

## Review of *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* by Alan J. Thompson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011)

JUSTIN ERIC RICHARDSON

A native of New Zealand, Alan J. Thompson (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is lecturer in New Testament at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, Croydon, New South Wales, Australia. In addition to the present work, he is the author of *One Lord, One People: The Unity of the Church in Acts* (T & T Clark) and is at work on a forthcoming guide to the Greek text of Luke's Gospel. Besides teaching and writing, Dr. Thompson also serves as the New Testament Book Review Editor for *Themelios Journal*.

*Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus* is the latest addition to the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. Commensurate with the series, Thompson's volume seeks to provide an "articulation and exposition of the structure of thought of a particular biblical writer or corpus." This is where Thompson seeks to make his contribution.

In his introduction, Thompson points out the way in which the book of Acts has been used more for answers to debates within the contemporary church that were not necessarily prominent in Luke's aims. Thus, Thompson's goal is to allow Luke's own emphases to speak for themselves.

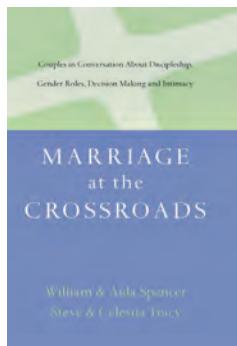
Thompson highlights Acts as an account of the "continuing story" of God's saving purposes. He maintains that Luke, the beloved physician and sometime companion of Paul, is the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke authored the book of Acts sometime before A.D. 70. Luke's primary audience was a Jewish or Gentile Christian audience familiar with the language and promises of the Old Testament. Since Luke's Gospel and the book of Acts cannot be dealt with entirely separately, Thompson does at times make references to the Gospel of Luke. However, his primary focus is on the text of Acts itself. Thompson aims to offer a framework for interpreting the book of Acts so that the major themes highlighted by Luke may be identified and related to the book of Acts as a whole. Thompson achieves this goal by focusing on the various forms of repetition in seeking to observe Luke's emphases. These forms of repetition may be seen in patterns, summary statements, narration of major events, terms within individual accounts, "frames" or "inclusios" (frame or inclusio is a technical term for a passage of Scripture in which the opening phrase or idea is repeated, paraphrased, or otherwise returned to at the close, i.e. Acts 6:1 and 7 emphasize the increase of the disciples; Acts 9:2 and 20 focus on Saul's actions at Damascus), and themes in contrasting accounts.

Thompson proposes that Luke intends his work to be read in the light of Old Testament promises and the continuing reign of Christ. Thus, the book of Acts is best understood in a "biblical-theological" framework that highlights the move from the Old Testament to what the kingdom of God looks like after Christ has come, died, risen, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. The departure of the Lord Jesus does not mean the departure of the kingdom of God; rather the kingdom is continuing to be administered through him as he reigns from the right hand of the Father. The suffering and opposition which believers face is due to the fact that the kingdom has "not yet" come in fullness. The resurrection is the fulfillment of Israel's hope. Luke highlights the resurrection as the supreme evidence of the achievement of God's saving purposes and the arrival of the age to come. The arrival of the age to come inaugurates a "new authority" structure and signals the end of the old temple system and law. Jesus is the replacement and fulfillment of the temple. Luke also emphasizes the salvation-historical shift to the teaching of the apostles, as Jesus' authorized delegates and therefore Christ's guiding authority for God's people. Luke aims to

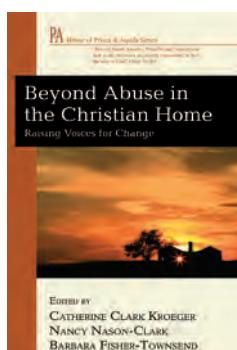
provide believers, such as Theophilus, assurance that God's plan of salvation is being carried out according to his promises through the continuing reign of the risen Lord Jesus.

Thompson should be commended for the way in which he highlights the various emphases of the book of Acts and their cohesion in the inauguration of the kingdom of God under the risen Lord Jesus. Thompson's work is easily navigated and is a welcome resource for anyone interested in Luke's writings.

Justin Richardson has recently completed his Master of Theology (Old Testament) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Previously, he acquired a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies and a Master of Divinity at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS, where he served as the Patrick Fairbairn Honors Scholar of Old Testament and Biblical Languages. Justin is married to Elizabeth Richardson and has a young family.

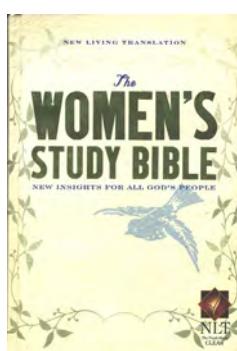


*Marriage at the Crossroads* is a unique book in which Aída and William Spencer and Steve and Celestia Tracy, two couples from the differing perspectives of egalitarianism and soft complementarianism, share a constructive dialogue about marriage in practice. Covering a variety of topics like marriage discipleship, headship and submission, roles and decision making, and intimacy in marriage, this book offers a wealth of insight for counselors and pastors helping couples navigate how marriage works in theory and in practice.



*Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change* presents an accurate, faith-based analysis of abuse in the Christian family context. As it provides resources to deal with this problem, the contributors come from various faith traditions, work in different contexts, and see the issue in part based on their own narrative and training. Yet, despite their differences, they are unanimous that violence has no place in the home.

The late Dr. Catherine Kroeger was a Ranked Adjunct Professor of Classical and Ministry Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and frequently taught at CUME.



*The Women's Study Bible* explores questions that have special relevance for women. What was daily life like for women in biblical times? Each biblical book is accompanied by an introduction, running annotations that highlight passages that specifically address women and women's issues and clarify lessons that women might draw from more general passages. This edition uses the New Living Translation and includes New Oxford Bible maps and a helpful index. It is edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans and has many contributors from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (professors and alumnae).

## Review of *Non-Prophet Murders* by Becky Wooley (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications of Wipf and Stock, 2010)

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Satire is a genre sparsely used these days in Christian publishing. The Bible, of course, overflows with it, from God teasing Moses with gentle irony in Exodus 33:23 (a passage we read solemnly in our churches, but, according to Old Testament scholars raised guffaws from the gathered Israelites as a little comic relief) to Elijah's satirical suggestion on Mount Carmel that Baal must be ensconced in a job-side johnny to account for his inability to respond to his prophets' entreaties. God scoffs even more caustically at those who would oppose divine power in Psalm 2:4 and Psalm 37:13, a quality God's personified wisdom shares in Proverbs 1:26. Jesus, of course, certainly used plenty of irony, some of that spilling over into out and out sarcasm, with biting descriptions of his opponents as "whitewashed tombs" (Matt. 23:27), "nests of snakes" (Matt. 12:34, an insult John the Baptist used earlier in 3:7), and those who make a convert "twice the child of hell" that they are (Matt. 23:15). Maybe we are not encouraged to use negative humor as much as did God and the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New because we are not responsible enough to use it wisely. Jesus was God-Among-Us and the prophets were inspired. We are not. We wind up calling each other "worthless" and falling into condemnation when we try sarcasm (see Matt. 5:22). Wiser to put it like the category of vengeance as something to leave to the Lord.

Occasionally, however, satire, or extended irony, is a safe and effective tool to use, and, when it is done well – as, say, Joseph T. Bayly did in his classic *The Gospel Blimp*, no one gets hurt, everybody chuckles, and it makes us pause and think about the way we try to live out our responsibilities as Christians. Bayly's *Blimp*, for example, leaves us wondering if it would not be wiser and more profitable simply to talk to our next door neighbors than to go to elaborate means like dropping bushels-full of tracts on their roofs and into their rain gutters, which they will remove, grumbling. Since so few among us these days seem to be as adept at this as was Joe Bayly (besides, maybe, the keepers of *The Wittenburg Door*), Christian publishers remain hesitant to venture down this path. Since publishing professionals point out that 80% of readers of Christian fiction are suburban and rural women and these are not credited with a sense of humor by publishers (!), inspirational romances seem to comprise the river of fiction poured out in endless waves to readers, and what other types of creative writing may eddy out near the far banks tend to bog down in promotion, sales, and sequels. That is the received wisdom.

Enter Wipf and Stock, Publishers, who appear to be afraid of nothing, and Becky Wooley, church survivor and satirist of the over-the-top school of persuasion. Her novel *Non-Prophet Murders* is a satire of the first order – a rousing reaction to a lifetime of conservative Christian hoopla from one who remains faithful, but has some battle tales to tell.

*Non-Prophet Murders* is a solid *who-dun-it?* with a cast of glad-handing conservative clergy who are dropping like pink slips in pay envelopes (or audit slips attached to state tax returns) in this season of recession. Set in the Bible belt, her novel revolves around an emerging church in the basement of a bar whose young members are still in many ways attached to the large fundamentalist churches in town. Numerous deftly drawn personal stories converge as one after another of the town's leading clergy are taken out in quite creative ways. As the ramifications of the excesses of the parents fall on the children, these young with their lives in both worlds (that is to say both churches) investigate. The ridiculous and the deadly meet, as the author, who knows her conservative foibles, proves that kitsch can be fatal, even if it is done in the name of all that is holy. Those of us who have had a fundamentalist rearing wince at the spot-on descriptions and

embarrassingly true to life incidences that unfold everywhere in this racing tale. The words of Jesus were never more shown to be appropriate, when he asked if at his return he would find faith on earth (Luke 18:8). I think he meant, will anything we do supposedly in his name be recognizable to him?

A genre piece, Becky Wooley's *Non-Prophet Murders* is a fine mystery and a laugh out loud satire, but it is also therapeutic as well. Its point is to examine the faddish foibles of far-out conservatism, yes, but it also asks some tough questions about the fate of those who live and move and have their being within it. It reminds us actions have consequences. Power trips even in the name of religion ignite reactions. Similar to the questions posed in Robert Duvall's film *The Apostle*, this book, while it entertains, challenges the excesses of expressions of our faith to ask if we are actually hurting rather than helping when we indulge in them. Such questions need to be asked not just by those on the outside but by those on the inside as well who, after all, know the ethos more intimately and may portray it more accurately. This is what Becky Wooley, who remains faithfully on the inside, is doing. And this is what makes this book worthwhile as an insider's critique and well worth reading and reflecting upon even after the laughter stops.

William David Spencer is Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts, teaching in Gordon-Conwell's Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). He is the author of over 200 articles, stories, poems, editorials, and 11 books, the latest of which are *Marriage at the Crossroads: Couples in Conversation about Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decision Making and Intimacy* (IVP), a new edition of his book about the Rastafarian view of Christ *Dread Jesus* (Wipf and Stock), and an urban adventure mystery novel in e-serial form available from [www.helpinghandspress.com](http://www.helpinghandspress.com), *Name in the Papers*.

# Dread Jesus

## WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

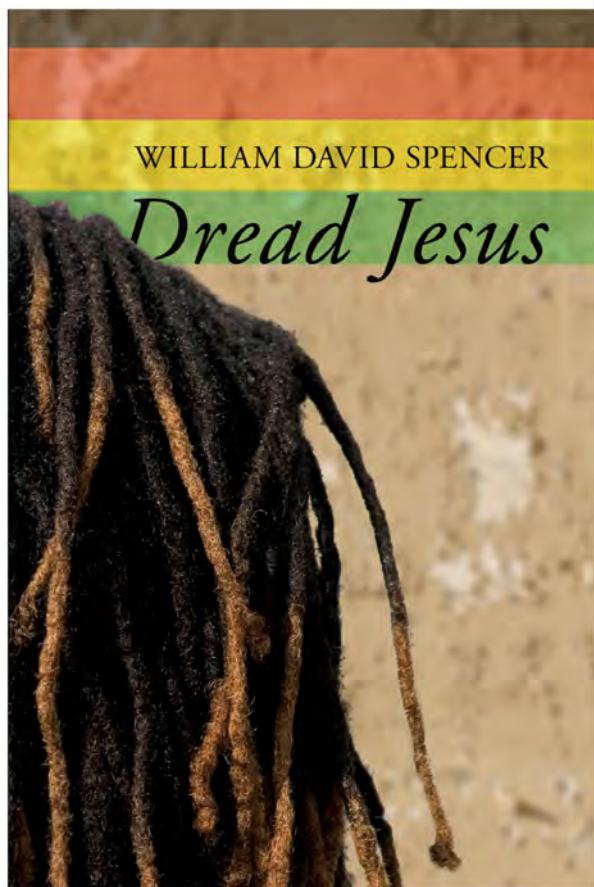
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Bob Marley has become an icon among youth across the world. T-shirts with his picture, reggae music sung by him and many others from Jamaica and other nations, hair of all colors in dreadlocks together proclaim a message that signifies personal freedom and global liberation. But behind these symbols is a profound Afro-Caribbean identity movement and a faith that few understand.

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**WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER** is an editor of the best-selling textbook on the Rastafarian movement *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, which is universally recognized as the definitive multiauthor work in the field. He has taught in Jamaica and has authored or edited ten other books on global and religious themes. He is Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston/Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME).



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Review of *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles* edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2010)

CHANG SOO LEE

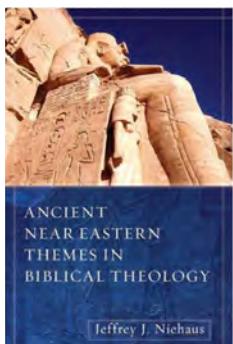
*Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder, is a collection of essays written by a team of twelve well-established evangelical scholars. It is written for pastors, seminary students, or people who are serious about getting up-to-date scholarly information on the Pastoral Epistles (PE). Most of the writers are specialists in the PE, having written their doctoral dissertations on a topic in the PE, and are thereby capable of delineating theologies of the PE while also engaging in the theological debates with the critical scholars who do not assume Paul's authorship of the letters.

In Chapter One, “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles,” Andreas Köstenberger describes the fundamental hermeneutical debates around the PE and introduces major issues ranging from authorship and church leadership to the role of women in the church. In Chapter Two, “Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Pastoral Epistles,” Terry Wilder defends Pauline authorship of the PE by providing literary and historical (external) evidences for authenticity while debunking arguments for pseudonymity. In Chapter Three, “The Purpose and Stewardship Theme within the Pastoral Epistles,” Alan Tomlinson examines a controlling metaphor of estate stewardship and household language as a central element in understanding the PE. In Chapter Four, “Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles,” Ray Van Neste shows that 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are coherent documents with a reasonable flow of thought. In Chapter Five, “The Sovereign Savior of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus,” Greg Couper provides the doctrine of God in the PE. In Chapter Six, “The Mystery of Godliness Is Great: Christology in the Pastoral Epistles,” Daniel Akin examines the Christology of the PE by noting common themes and emphases in each of the letters. In Chapter Seven, “The Function of Salvation in the Letters to Timothy and Titus,” George Wieland notes how the concept of salvation plays a vital role in relation to the purpose of each letter in the PE. In Chapter Eight, “Ecclesiology in the Pastoral Epistles,” Ben Merkle argues that the PE provide us with crucial information regarding the offices of elder or overseer and deacon. In Chapter Nine, “The Sagacious Use of Scripture,” Paul Wolfe argues that the Pastoral Epistles as the work of a mature biblical theologian provide the readers with a high view of Scripture. In Chapter Ten, “The Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles,” Thor Madsen notes that the PE agree with the major epistles in their core logic and content in that believers in the hostile world are to endure suffering with the hope of eternal life. In Chapter Eleven, “Mission in the Pastoral Epistles,” Chiao Ek Ho argues that the Pastorals contain Paul’s mission-thought structure and “missionary heartbeat.” In Chapter Twelve, “The Pastoral Epistles in Recent Study,” I. Howard Marshall provides a general overview of scholarship on the PE since the turn of the century.

While some may argue that these collected essays are rather eclectic without a center or flow of logic, I find them to be rather well-organized. We can see that the editors arranged the chapters so that they move from introductory issues of hermeneutics and authorship of the PE (chs. 1 & 2) to purpose and structure of the PE (chs. 3 & 4). Then major theological topics in the PE are dealt with: God as the Sovereign Savior (ch. 5), Christology (ch. 6), Soteriology (ch. 7), Ecclesiology (ch. 8), Bibliology (ch. 9), Ethics (ch. 10), and Mission (ch. 11). The book ends by surveying other commentaries and suggests topics for further research (ch. 12). I find the arrangement of the chapters to be logical and judicious. While each scholar deserves acclaim for his work, I find

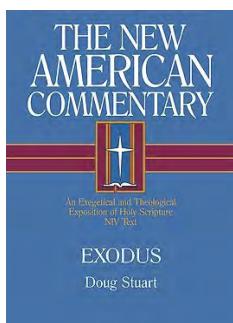
Wilder's defense of Paul's authorship to be especially thorough and convincing while Tomlinson's discussion of the purpose of the PE clear and insightful. Couser's chapter provides compelling engagement with the critical scholars and establishes a sound argument for reading the PE with the traditional assumption of Paul's authorship. I find one of the most valuable chapters in the book is the one by I.H. Marshall, who provides a thorough and succinct survey of all the major commentators as well as identifies areas in the PE which need further investigation. The taxonomy of names and topics in the areas of PE scholarship is something producible only by a seasoned scholar like I.H. Marshall, who has supervised the doctoral work of a number of scholars who contributed to this book. I am not hesitant to say that the book is worth the money just to peak at the last chapter by Marshall. Even though some may point out that the essays are sometimes redundant in their dealings with issues like authorship or structures of the letters, I would argue that this anthology of essays on the PE by such fine evangelical scholars may be the best introductory book to get the grasp of the scholarly landscape of the PE from a distinctly evangelical perspective. I would recommend this book especially to students and teachers who are looking for a thorough guide to recent scholarship on the Pastoral Epistles.

Chang Soo Lee is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.Div. 2011 & Th.M. in Biblical Theology 2012) and is pursuing a Ph.D. in New Testament at McMaster Divinity College under the supervision of Dr. Stanley Porter.



*Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology.* “Jeffrey Niehaus’s book is wonderfully helpful in explaining the connections between the thought patterns and religious practices of the ancient biblical world and the way these patterns and practices were used by God to prepare the way for his special revelation to Israel. Even though the concepts shared by ancient pagan peoples only imperfectly and dimly reflected the truth, Niehaus shows how the written expressions of those concepts provide us with a backdrop from which to better understand the Bible itself. This is a book that any student or pastor ought to read as a prolegomenon to doing biblical theology.” -Douglas Stuart, Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Jeffrey J. Niehaus (Ph.D.) is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and teaches at its Hamilton, Boston and Charlotte campuses.



*Exodus* (The New American Commentary Vol. 2) is one of the newest works on Exodus to be found. Stuart carries out a careful and thorough exegetical work that, in his words, “tries not to avoid, but to subordinate purely interscholarly interests to the far more important interests of the pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and other workers who will, I hope, find this book a helpful guide to their use of Exodus in Christian ministry.”

Douglas K. Stuart (Ph.D.) is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and teaches primarily at the Hamilton campus. He is author of many other books including *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, co-authored with Gordon Fee (Zondervan), and other commentaries on the Minor Prophets and Ezekiel.

## Review of *Not Sure: A Pastor's Journey from Faith to Doubt* by John Suk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011)

BENJAMIN B. DEVAN

After I earlier reviewed John Ortberg's *Know Doubt* for *Africanus Journal*, the editors asked me to consider John Suk's *Not Sure: A Pastor's Journey from Faith to Doubt*.<sup>1</sup> Suk is pastor of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Cobourg, Ontario, former editor-in-chief of the Christian Reformed denominational magazine *The Banner*, and a firm believer in doubt. Nicholas Wolterstorff forwards Suk, "This...is not a story that begins with faith and ends with unbelief. It's a story about changes in the author's Christian faith, from the undoubting and unwavering faith of a child, through a bout with wracking doubt, to the faith of a mature adult who is able to say about many of his former certainties that he is no longer sure" (vii).

Researching my dissertation on the New Atheists, I encountered several former pastors who left Christianity for atheism. Dan Barker published *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist* repackaged as *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*, and more recently his riff on Rick Warren, *The Good Atheist: Living a Purpose-Filled Life without God*.<sup>2</sup> Baptist turned atheist Robert M. Price also parodies Warren with *The Reason Driven Life: What Am I Here on Earth For?*<sup>3</sup> John W. Loftus penned multiple editions of *Why I Became an Atheist: A Former Preacher Rejects Christianity*.<sup>4</sup> Loftus apparently felt Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006) and Sam Harris's *The End of Faith* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005) were insufficiently anti-Christian, so he edited *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails* and *The End of Christianity*.<sup>5</sup> Barker wrote a forward to *The Christian Delusion* and Price a chapter for *The End of Christianity*.

New Atheist Daniel C. Dennett and Linda LaScola additionally co-authored "Preachers Who Are Not Believers," and Christopher Hitchens included in *The Portable Atheist* two selections from Billy Graham's former colleague Charles Templeton, who Lee Strobel also interviewed as a tragic figure in *The Case for Faith*.<sup>6</sup> Sadly, some erstwhile shepherds or their sons become lost sheep. The young Charles Darwin and Scientology aficionado Tom Cruise purportedly contemplated ordination to the Anglican and Catholic priesthoods respectively.<sup>7</sup> Atheist John Stuart Mill's father was a Church of Scotland clergyman, Nietzsche's was a Lutheran, and atheist-to-deist Anthony Flew's father was a Methodist minister.

1 Benjamin B. DeVan, "Review of *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists: Musings on Why God Is Good and Faith Isn't Evil* by David G. Myers (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) and *Know Doubt: The Importance of Embracing Uncertainty in Your Faith* (published first in hardcover as *Faith and Doubt*, 2008) by John Ortberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009)," *Africanus Journal* 4:2 (Nov. 2012), 51-54.

2 Dan Barker, *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist* (Madison: Freedom from Religion Foundation, 1992, reissued as *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* (Berkeley: Ulysses, 2008)); Dan Barker, *The Good Atheist: Living a Purpose-Filled Life without God* (Berkeley: Ulysses, 2011).

3 Robert M. Price, *The Reason Driven Life: What Am I Here on Earth For?* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2006).

4 John Loftus, *Why I Rejected Christianity: A Former Apologist Explains* (Bloomington: Trafford Publishing, 2006, reissued as *Why I Became an Atheist: A Former Preacher Rejects Christianity* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2012).

5 Daniel C. Dennett and Linda LaScola, "Preachers Who Are Not Believers," *Evolutionary Psychology* 8:1 (2010): 122-150; John W. Loftus (ed.), *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2010); John W. Loftus (ed.), *The End of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2011).

6 Christopher Hitchens (ed.), *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever* (Philadelphia: De Capo, 2007), 282-286; Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). Cf. Charles Templeton, *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith* (Toronto: McClellan & Stewart, 1999).

7 Cf. e.g., Michael Daly, "Exclusive: Tom Cruise's Year at the Seminary," *Newsweek Magazine* (July 9, 2012), <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/07/09/tom-cruise-was-on-track-to-become-a-priest-in-his-youth.html>; Charles Darwin, *Autobiographies* (Penguin Classics), ed. Michael Neve and Sharon Messenger (New York: Penguin, 2002), 29.

Atheists might subsequently claim educated young people and pastors flee Christianity in droves, but I have yet to see social scientific evidence for this. Social scientists Rodney Stark, David G. Myers, and Bradley R.E. Wright imply the contrary.<sup>8</sup> One moreover wonders whether some preachers turned atheists were really “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (cf. Matt 7:15, 2 Cor 11:13) and whether others would have left Christianity if they had carefully pondered *Not Sure*.

Alternately playful and serious, Suk wants readers to be “more relaxed about both faith and doubt, and...ready to engage both faith and doubt with deeper self-understanding – perhaps even with a sense of adventure” (8). Suk spices his “there and back again” narrative (to quote Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*) with literary and cultural references ranging from *Beowulf* (also a Tolkien interest) to digital age atheists (e.g., Susan Jacoby, 90-96, 183) and evangelicals (e.g., David Wells, 49, 91, 150, 183). Suk’s later chapters question the use and implications of the phrase “personal relationship with Jesus” (140-157), confront “the health-and-wealth gospel” (163), and probe the problematic significance of doctrine, ethnicity, and morality “as a kind of spiritual tag team that defines ‘true faith’ for many Christians” (188). Suk concludes by testifying to faith in God who is “‘greater than our hearts,’ even when we doubt” (207).

Suk appears less concerned with systematically contending for or against Christianity (cf. Jude 1:3) and more interested in conveying his journey to integrate intense doubts with what he perceives as a more mature, dynamic faith. Some readers will be “not sure” about the value of Suk’s memoir. They will disagree with his criticisms of “personal relationship” phraseology and suspect that Suk misdiagnoses or overstates Christian doctrinal rigidity and moralism; to say nothing of his allegation that Christianity is broadly appropriated as some sort of ethnic moniker.

Other readers will discover a kindred spirit whose belief in Jesus is not eviscerated but enriched by holy doubting. Like Ortberg, but unlike Barker, Loftus, and Price, Suk seeks to be faithful even or especially when he doubts. The Good Shepherd may well employ *Not Sure* as a gentle harness for other sheep lost in the wilderness to guide or carry them home.

Benjamin B. DeVan has taught religion, philosophy, and African American literature at North Carolina Central University, Peace College, and a January term mini-course at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, “Religion: Bringing the World Together, or Tearing the World Apart?” He completed an M.A. in Counseling at Asbury Theological Seminary, an M.Div. at Duke University, a Th.M. at Harvard in World Religions with a thesis on Evangelical Christians and Muslims, and is now a doctoral candidate at the University of Durham writing a dissertation on the New Atheism.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Benjamin B. DeVan, “Review of Rodney Stark, *What Americans Really Believe: New Findings from the Baylor Surveys on Religion* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53:4 (December, 2010): 867-70; Myers, *A Friendly Letter to Atheists and Skeptics*; Bradley R.E. Wright, *Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites...and Other Lies You've Been Told: A Sociologist Shatters Myths From the Secular and Christian Media* (Bloomington: Bethany House, 2010); Bradley R.E. Wright, *Upside: Surprising Good News About the State of Our World* (Bloomington: Bethany House, 2011).

## Review of *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) and *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2003) by Mark Noll

BENEDICT GAMBINO

Mark Noll is the Francis A. McAnaney professor of History at the University of Notre Dame and one of the foremost Christian historians in America. In 1994, Noll wrote his influential *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, a critical assessment of the state of evangelical thinking and scholarship. His argument in that book was that evangelicals do not engage successfully intellectually with the secular world as they should – both inside and outside the academy.

Perhaps the most impressive example of Noll's own work in recent years which reflects the reverse of this hypothesis is the first in what Noll promises to be a series on the history of evangelicalism. In his 2003 book, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, Noll takes the reader on a journey through, as the subtitle states, “The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys.” Along the way, Noll shows how these early evangelicals interacted with history, science, and philosophy to build a faith in Christ. Noll's own scholarship is an act of worship - the book is remarkable in its depth and detail. Noll weaves together a series of snapshots which illustrate the collective worldwide emergence of evangelicalism. Once more, within the book itself we learn of individuals who took seriously the quest for learning and saw this quest as God's call on their lives.

In this way, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* stands side by side with the earlier book. Here we have an example of first rate Christian scholarship from the same author, as well as a documentation of Christian thinkers who did not shy away from challenging thought. *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* is not a sequel so much as it is a follow-up to the 1994 book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, in that it attempts to provide a way forward in engaging the Christian faith with scholarship. Noll offers a solution to an audience of primarily those interested in academic or intellectual pursuits.

For Noll, the central factor in engaging Christian faith with scholarship is knowledge of the ancient Christian creeds. Noll argues that knowing and understanding these creeds and having them be central to one's faith can encourage, develop, and underpin serious learning and scholarship. His message for fellow evangelicals is that, if their claims about Jesus are true, they should be “among the most active, most serious, and most open-minded advocates of general human learning” (x).

The book is divided into chapters detailing a “Christ-centered framework for learning” (chs.1-3), followed by a blueprint for how that framework may be implemented (chs. 4-7). Following is a closing chapter outlaying “The Way Ahead” and a postscript in which Noll revisits his 1994 book and asks “How Fares the Evangelical Mind?”

The first chapter lays out an explanation of the Christian creeds (Apostle's, Nicene, and Chalcedonian). Noll states the creeds “define the heart of Christianity” and are important for Christian scholarship because they have lasted for centuries and are concise and true interpretations of “the person and work of Christ.” Through subsequent chapters in the first part of the book, Noll builds on the foundation that Jesus is origin of all things – especially serious scholarship. The creeds, therefore, should inform intellectual life. In the second part of the book, Noll zones in on topics such as the Atonement, Christology, and science and faith to delve deeply and examine how the intellectual life can be impacted by the framework envisioned.

Noll is not afraid to tackle the thorny in this book. While not taking a position either way, he reminds the enlightened and informs conservative readers that late-19th century theologian B.B. Warfield was – while a defender of biblical inerrancy – “open to the idea of evolution” (111). Another chapter is devoted to dissecting Peter Enns’ controversial book *Inspiration and Incarnation* as an example of quality Christian scholarship that transcends boundaries, despite Noll disagreeing with some of Enns’ conclusions.

Mark Noll’s *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* is highly recommended for any Christian (or, in fact, non-Christian) who seeks the intellectual life or possibly hopes to pursue academics. It is an engaging and invaluable work which seeks at once to liberate and center Christian academic pursuit.

**Benedict Gambino** is a student at the Hamilton campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is completing a Master of Arts in Theology (2013). Benedict (Ben) was born and reared in Norwalk, CT and has been involved in ministry to college students. He is a music enthusiast and history buff and enjoys reading books and running hills.

**Review of *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* by Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez  
(Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011)**

JAY ST. FORT

Every now and then, the Holy Spirit illuminates one or two people with fresh or renewed understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural environment of the church throughout its journey toward heaven. This present generation is blessed to embrace the insights and challenges penned by Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez in their new book *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership*. This book offers to the readers a practical theology of congregations and ethnicities.

The introduction of the book lays out the ground for racial, ethnic, and cultural realities within the church and the churches. The upbringing of the writers and their genealogical descent qualifies them to tackle with confidence the issues raised in the book.

The book is divided into three parts: 1) Theology and Context, 2) Social Cultural Perspectives, and 3) Leadership, Communication, and Change. Besides the three parts, Branson and Martínez provide us with several short Bible studies throughout to emphasize or strengthen the issues being addressed. Throughout the book, there are also lists for personal reflection and group exercises embracing tables, movies, charts, and visual aids to captivate the reader and hammer the point home.

One of the writers, Mark Lau Branson, who is ordained in the Pentecostal tradition, opens the first part of the book, Theology and Context, revisiting the Azusa Street Mission and the 1906 experience of the movement of the Holy Spirit. He points out the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing together race, ethnic group, and culture. Branson helps us look at the biblical data, the theological material, church history information, creeds, and experiences (individual and collective) in order to discover what God is saying with regard to interracial, ethnic diversity, and intercultural worship. Branson is strong in moving theology from being theoretical to practical in order to experience fully the moving of the Holy Spirit within the church. He also challenges leaders to be consciously proactive in realizing, understanding, and embracing the context and complexity of intercultural life within the church and community at large.

In the second point of the first part of the book, Branson seeks to describe an ecclesiology that requires to God, to each other, and to the world that God loves (60). An understanding of the church, its formation, and mission is key in addressing the issue of racial diversity, ethnic diversity, and intercultural complexity and context. Branson emphasizes that mission is not one of the things that a church does but it is the life of the church, the primary purpose for its existence. To support this approach, he uses the trinity as a model for the sending relationship in the sense of the Father sent the Son, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and Jesus sent the disciples (the church). The missional consciousness of the church will cause it to cross the cultural boundaries, live missiologically, and be aware of the social forces in its attempt to shape its identity. While Branson and Martínez underscore the strength of intercultural relation and interaction, they do not advocate, by any means, that persons should forsake or undermine important elements of their cultural identity.

In the second part of the book, Branson deals with worldviews, reality, and assumption. According to Branson, we all are born into a worldview or join one in which some of us function as "Culture Creators" while others are just passive objects accepting their fate. "Lifeworld" (worldview) is seen as barriers that need to be crossed or removed in order for the church to

have meaningful intercultural relationship and worship. People must be conscious of their own worldviews as they are seeking to understand God's work in bringing them together as one people (His people).

In the following chapter of part two, Martínez considers how language and its structure affect our thinking mechanism that, in turn, affects our perception and action. He continues to address the complexity of language and means of communication and how different groups use verbal and non verbal communication in their relationship and interaction. Martínez speaks of the need to strengthen relationships across multilingual and multicultural differences by taking into consideration the role of power in communication. To this effect Martínez states, "Leaders need to be particularly sensitive to the complexities of communication in multilingual, multicultural environments so they can strengthen relationships across these differences" (123). He raises the awareness of social relations and their impact on multiracial and multicultural churches. He speaks of the formal, informal, and egalitarian approaches. He wants his readers to understand how gifts are viewed and received across cultures and the tendency of reciprocity embedded in certain cultures. "Because solid intercultural relationships are important for multicultural churches, these congregations will need to address how different cultures define relationships and social concepts such as friendship, commitment partnership and even 'belonging' when it refers to a congregation" (146).

In chapter 8, the writers raise the challenge of imbedded cultural perceptions within a multicultural church and the role of leaders to foster not only awareness but also the need for integration and interrelatedness. Leaders must be aware of the numerous ways that culturally embedded perceptions are a challenge to culturally diversity in a church. The writers emphasize that our worldview will affect our interpretation of data which, in turn, will affect our behavior, our perception, and our thought process. The value we assign to data is proportionate to our cultural upbringing. Our way of perceiving things will lead to very different thoughts (175).

The last part of this fascinating book, chapters 9, 10, and 11, deals with leadership, communication, and change within the framework of racial, cultural, and intercultural relations. Intercultural communication must be understood out of the worldviews proposed by Jurgen Habermas's social theory: lifeworlds, world concepts, and communicative competence (190). The burden falls on church leaders, in their interpretive and relational work, to have a primary role in shaping environments and prompting conversations that increase the communicative competence of a congregation (190). The writers continue to emphasize emphatically the critical role of church leaders: "The work of leaders to shape intercultural communication in faith communities is a complex and multifaceted task. The goal is attentiveness – to God, to congregation, to oneself, to cultures, to power, to consequences" (206). In the last chapter of the book, Martínez speaks of the need for effective leaders to be competent in technical understanding, analysis, and managing life and ministry in a changing environment. They provide us in the appendix section some comprehensive theological resources and an annotated bibliography to expand our horizon on the topic and better equip ourselves to understand and serve the body of Christ.

This particular book is loaded with integrated wisdom and insight regarding to dealing and understanding race, cultures, and intercultural relations within the body of Christ. This book is a must read by anyone engaging in a multicultural setting. The lack of understanding of this crucial issue is causing unintentional abuses in the kingdom of God and preventing the growth of individual race, culture, and ethnicity.

Jay St. Fort (Th.M., Boston University School of Theology; M.Div. and D.Min, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) is adjunct instructor of Systematic Theology (French-Creole Track) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and president of PRESS Bible Institute for the ministerial training of lay workers in the United States, Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

## Review of *Comfortably Jewish* by Garrett R. Smith (San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2010)

REBEKAH PILL

Garrett R. Smith's *Comfortably Jewish* is a practical guidebook of sorts for Jewish people who are unaffiliated with the Jewish community and still want to celebrate their Jewish identity and heritage. With over 50 percent of Jewish marriages today being intermarriages, this is a very commonplace situation within which people find themselves, especially as they seek to raise children (2). While the book does not claim to be a definitive guide on the subject, it is a help for those desiring to embrace or transmit Jewish cultural values and observances while living outside of a Jewish community. This book is not exclusively for parents, but many of the examples and situations do favor that life stage, especially as tensions in families arise around this subject most when it concerns the raising of children.

The introduction likens Smith's approach to the subject of Jewishness like a functional working knowledge of the guitar, i.e. "on the joys of playing the guitar badly" (1). Early in this same introduction, he gives a list of types of prospective readers and says, "What you all have in common is that though you are not strongly involved within the Jewish community, you still care about being Jewish. You may not be sure what that means, but it is who you are" (3). Smith approaches the subject not as an expert, but as a fellow traveler. It is this sort of language and conversational style that makes this book seem more like a dialogue with the author and less like a prescriptive guide to ideal enculturation and intercultural child-rearing. There is nothing too technical or academic about this work, making it perfect for parents looking for suggestions on a specific topic, holiday, or life stage.

Smith's approach is honest and warm. He references his own faith as a Jewish believer in Jesus in a way that is truthful, but not overbearing—making this a guide that could be recommended to Jewish friends. Smith uses personal experiences from his own childhood memories, anecdotes from adventures in raising his own young children, and the stories of others to demonstrate that maintaining a cultural heritage is not something that can only exist within the framework of a traditional community setting.

Actively pursuing Jewish identity outside of Jewish community is difficult, and this is true of any cultural or ethnic identity. Though this book is specifically geared towards a Jewish audience, there are general principles about identifying the core values of any culture and finding meaningful ways to engage with them. The end of "Part Two" concludes this way, "Helping your child move in both a Jewish culture and an American culture, and perhaps the culture of your spouse as well, should not confuse them so much as give them the ability to connect with people of many different cultures. You are helping them become global people in our new international world" (17).

As a child of one Jewish parent and one non-Jewish parent, I was raised outside of the Jewish community. I am happy to recommend this book as it resonates with many of my own identity conflicts growing up and also because it is a resource I am glad to own knowing that someday I too will raise children in an unaffiliated Jewish home. God places us in contexts we do not always understand, but to embrace them and our cultural heritage is to embrace who we were created to be.

Rebekah Pill is the adult child of a Jewish intermarriage. She grew up with parents who were committed followers of Jesus and who wanted her to have a strong sense of Jewish identity. She lives in New York and is on staff with Jews for Jesus, ministering to children and youth growing up in Jewish believing homes.

## Review of *Under One Steeple: Multiple Congregations Sharing More Than Just Space* by Lorraine Cleaves Anderson (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012)

EMMETT PRICE

Urban ministry is a challenge! Although urban settings are often fertile, if not saturated with potential believers, limited meeting space options have become a major obstacle. As corporate entities, universities, and a host of other capitalistic forces make “offers that are not being refused,” church steeples are increasingly disappearing from urban landscapes. *Under One Steeple: Multiple Congregations Sharing More Than Just Space* by Lorraine Cleaves Anderson offers a solution through a dynamic recipe for *hospiradicality*, “hospitality that is radical and rich and real” (xxii). Written to stimulate more sharing amongst congregations with space, this book will greatly benefit seminarians and pastors as well as laity who are innovative and courageous enough to stimulate new conversations of sharing within their congregations. In fact, *Under One Steeple* would serve as an amazing required reading for courses focusing on church planting, urban ministry, and special topics courses dealing with community relations, community collaborations, and/ or interchurch collaborations.

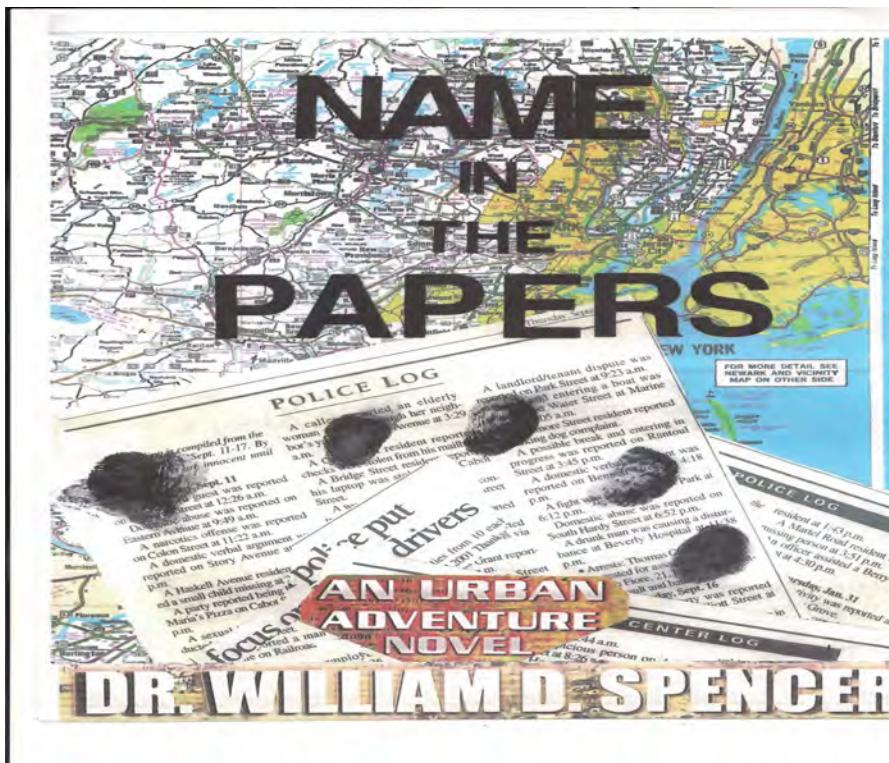
This book (137 pp.) is easy to read and jam-packed with stories to stimulate just about every emotion able to be provoked through reading. With each chapter initiated through a photo and guiding Scripture, the book in many ways reads as a devotional. Each chapter ends with a short yet culminating saying, quotation, or prayer and a section called “Additional Scriptures to Ponder.” This text is grounded in an orthodox evangelical reading of the Bible with a persuasive eye towards egalitarianism.

From the detailed accounts of Rev. Dr. Maung Maung Hatwe and his spontaneously scheduled ordination to the interesting spiritual journey of Jack Powers (poet and artist), the book is an intimate portrayal of real people’s challenges and victories of faith. From reminiscences of a unique invitation to a traditional Korean rites of passage celebration to a dazzling last minute wedding, these stories reveal the true and enduring compassion of a congregation and its courageous leader, willing to navigate unchartered waters to see God’s work done in the Boston neighborhood of Allston, Massachusetts. Miracles such as a divinely timed musician and the idea that launched a now legendary series of rock shows reveal God’s tremendous blessings upon ministries that sought God’s directives both together and apart, under one steeple. Episodes such as fending off door-to-door cult proselytizers and the numerous situations where bad chemistry threatened unity are transparently told in order for the reader to glean insight from the challenges. This sharing of rich information is worth the price of the book alone. Beyond the numerous transformative stories, the text is full of insightfully informative templates of vision statements, mission statements, guiding principles and the covenants that reveal the best practices towards effective church collaborations.

Narrated through the pen of Lorraine Cleaves Anderson, pastor of International Community Church (ICC), this book is a one-of-a-kind treasure trove. Pastor Lorraine’s creative spirit is evident as the reader opens the first pages of the book to find her clever lyric, “Reciprocate.” A compassionate educator with a special passion for children as well as ostracized and disenfranchised individuals and families, Pastor Lorraine is a “living legend” within Greater Boston and surrounding areas. Similar to Jesus, the effectiveness of her endeavors comes from her deep sense of justice, equality, and her ability to see God’s hand actively moving in the midst of the most confusing, perplexing, and frustrating situations.

*Under One Steeple: Multiple Congregations Sharing More Than Just Space* is a book of ideas, reflections, and relationships by an author who has walked the walk, talked the talk, and who shepherds with a commitment to multicultural, multigenerational, multiracial, multiethnic, urban ministry.

Rev. Emmett G. Price III, Ph.D. is the founding pastor of Community of Love Christian Fellowship (a proud member of the ICC Collaborative of Churches). He is Associate Professor of Music and former chair of the Department of African American Studies at Northeastern University. A nationally ranked expert in Christian Worship, he is the founding president of the Black Church Music Ministry Project, a non-profit organization founded with the aim of serving, nurturing, and developing spiritual leaders within music ministry. He has also authored *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture: Toward Bridging the Generation Divide*.



Twelve years in the making, this is a novel about grace and community, woven into an exciting urban adventure tale. Young Jim Dowd, a seminary student, backs into serving a small city church and is plunged into a building series of events that throws him into the midst of a diverse group of inter-linked characters, including an intriguing young Latina woman whose caring mission among the families of prison inmates introduces him to a whole new world of street gangs, boxers, sorcerers, refugees. Their linked stories erupt into a rousing pot-boiling adventure full of mystery, suspense, and even romance, as Jim learns that faith is not an abstract matter – it is the essential stuff of life.

Author William David Spencer, the professor of theology and the arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Training, brings to this exciting story 47 years of city ministry. He has published 100s of articles, stories, poems and 12 books, including two definitive works: *Mysterium and Mystery* and *Chanting Down Babylon*.

***Name in the Papers*, published by Trestle Press/Helping Hands Press, is available now for only \$5.99 in eBook from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com), and [kobobooks.com](http://kobobooks.com).**

**A helpful supplement for classes in ministry!**

## Review of *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life* by James C. Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012)

LESLIE A. MCKINNEY

*Discovering Lectio Divina* is a book written by James C. Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard to reintroduce the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina* (Latin for “divine reading”), a practice of reading the Scriptures devotionally, into the church of Jesus Christ to encourage God’s people to pray and meditate on Scripture in order to satisfy their thirsty souls-for refreshment and renewal and to grow in “transformative intimacy” with God (12).

James Wilhoit is a professor at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, where he holds the Scripture Press Chair of Christian Formation and Ministry. He has also authored *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* and coedited the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*.

Evan Howard is director of the Spirituality Shoppe: An Evangelical Center for the Study of Christian Spirituality, located in Montrose, Colorado. He also authored *Praying the Scriptures* and the *Brazo Introduction to Christian Spirituality*. Dr. Howard has been teaching and leading workshops on Christian Spirituality throughout the world for more than twenty years.

The authors’ premise is that the Scriptures teach that all humans have an insatiable thirst or “soul restlessness” (12) that can only be satisfied in Christ and they believe that one important way to satisfy this thirst is to come into God’s presence through Scripture meditation, and allow God through God’s written word to satisfy the deep longings of the heart and to deepen the bonds of friendship with God. This book is an effective resource for any Christian desiring to learn this ancient practice and thereby come to know God better, to experience spiritual renewal through God’s word, and to grow in Christlikeness.

The book is divided into eight chapters. In the first chapter, the authors describe the human condition in depth, as one of insatiable soul thirst, and give solid biblical support for their argument. In this opening chapter, they invite God’s people to come to Jesus, the Living Water, through the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*, as a way of drawing them into a deeper communion with God to help satisfy their deep thirst.

Chapter two looks at Scripture as the divinely spoken word of God and thoroughly explains that it is inspiration, revelation, a record of God’s ongoing relationship with his people, as well as an invitation to know and to deepen their relationship with Christ.

Chapter three focuses on the powerful fact that humans encounter the Spirit of the living God when they pray and meditate on the word of God (45). Since Scripture is the inspired word of God, they believe that the Spirit is always available to God’s people, empowering, challenging, renewing, and transforming.

In chapters four through eight, the authors explain and expound upon five different aspects of the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina*: reading, meditating, praying, contemplating, and acting in the midst of the trials of life (26). They do not view them as sequential steps in a linear process, but as a natural flow or rhythm that God’s people can move in and out of as they encounter God’s Spirit through this ongoing lifestyle of prayer (26). They believe that all of these aspects, when faithfully practiced, will help transform and shape a Christian’s life so it reflects more of the beauty and glory of Christ.

As a pastor, spiritual director, and, most importantly, a soul that is forever thirsting for more of

God in my life, I cannot say enough about this devotional handbook on *Lectio Divina*. When I was asked to write a book review on this important spiritual topic of *Lectio Divina*, I thought, rather than just read it and review it, I would live it out in practice as I contemplated what I would write. Personally, I was feeling dry and distant from God and I took it along with me on a recent summer vacation as my recreational reading. Well, it accomplished what I believe the authors intended.

While on vacation, I returned to this practice of *Lectio Divina*, using all five aspects they describe in detail, and, lo and behold, in a week's time, the Spirit of God awakened me to a renewed love of God in my heart and to a deeper experience of his abiding, loving, and healing presence. The book helped me better understand that, when I read the Bible, and, especially, when I take time to chew on God's word over and over again, I am encountering the living God through the word. Yes, God is alive and present with me, speaking to me and transforming me through the power of the written word. And I am never alone!

I am thankful for their expert scholarship, their hearts of love and devotion for God, which speak loudly and clearly in the book, and their obedience to God's call to write this devotional guide for all Christians thirsting for more of God's presence in their lives.

I have read several books on *Lectio Divina*, and this is by far the best one yet, I think this is because the authors grounded *Discovering Lectio Divina* in excellent biblical scholarship from an evangelical perspective and also because they wisely encourage all who are thirsty to experience God's presence for themselves by inviting them, as does the prophet Isaiah, to come to the waters of life (Isa 55:1) and satisfy their thirst through practicing a devotional lifestyle of loving, praying, and meditating on God's eternal and life-giving word. How different the church of Jesus Christ would be if they all accepted the invitation to come daily to the living waters of life and allow the power of God's word to transform each into the radiant and brilliant image of Christ.

Leslie Ann McKinney serves as pastor of community at Pilgrim Church of Beverly, MA. She is a spiritual director who specializes in women's ministry. She earned her M. Div. and D. Min. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and authored *Accepted in the Beloved: A Devotional Bible Study for Women on Finding Healing and Wholeness in God's Love*, House of Prisca & Aquila Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

# Accepted in the Beloved

A Devotional Bible Study for Women on Finding Healing and Wholeness in God's Love

Leslie Ann McKinney

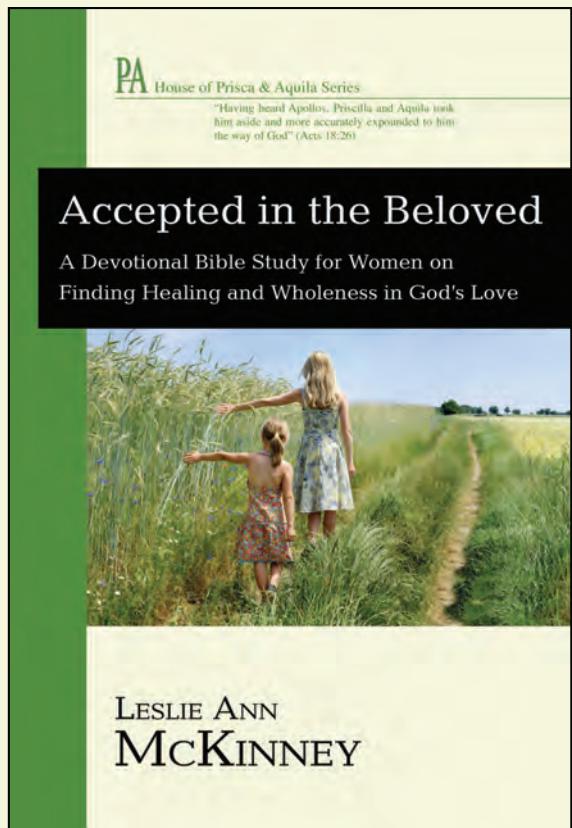
Are you struggling with fully accepting that God loves you?

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With an encouraging tone and transformative content, *Accepted in the Beloved* will help women find healing and wholeness in the love of the crucified Lord.



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## Review of *Answer the Prayer of Jesus: A Call for Biblical Unity* by John P. Lathrop (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011)

DOUG MACDOUGAL

In his third book, *Answer the Prayer of Jesus: A Call for Biblical Unity*, John Lathrop, a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (CUME), handles expertly and globally the subject of Christian unity. Unity may be our most important and effective contribution for extending God's kingdom and glory in this age. With an eye on the biblical text and an eye on the church world, Lathrop looks at Jesus' prayer in John 17. He examines the challenges to Christian unity in biblical times and in the contemporary church. He also offers inspiring and encouraging examples of unity from both the Bible and the contemporary church. The book addresses the issue of Christian unity globally by including information from some of his contacts from around the world.

Thank you, Pastor John, for a great job in addressing this subject with biblical clarity. Unity is an important issue in our day and central to the heart of Jesus. Lathrop defines unity as "the essential cooperation of born-again believers, regardless of denominational affiliation, working together for kingdom purposes" (8). This cooperation is based on an agreement on: "the nature of God (this would include the doctrine of the Trinity, the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the necessity of a born-again experience" (8). Lathrop defines the problem with representative examples of disunity from the New Testament. These include conflict over the distribution to the widows in Acts 6 and personal clashes between leaders like Paul and Barnabas. In addition, Pastor John supplies biblical examples of problems that involve differences of culture, church growth, doctrine, and other factors. He identifies three factors that contribute to disunity: the world without, sin within, and the devil in the spiritual realm. He also provides some counsel for seeking unity. As believers we need to extend grace to one another with reference to doctrines that are not essential, cardinal doctrines.

The author also cites some contemporary obstacles to unity, our intra-church hurdles: age, culture, spiritual maturity, spiritual gifts, the place of women in ministry, and leadership. He then covers the top interchurch hurdles that involve practices and beliefs about water baptism, communion, clerical vestments, and worship styles from liturgical to free.

I was blessed and equipped from reading this book, and I believe you will be also. If you were hardwired to enjoy glimpsing the character of God, you will enjoy a great view of the center of God's heart.

Pastor John communicates effectively. He connects immediately with his audience, today's body of Christ. His fresh perspective on Jesus' prayer in John 17 reminds us that we are to be on the giving end of that prayer, that is; we are supposed to be the answer to it. That idea readjusted my identity as a Child of God. I was inspired to jump in. I was quickly rewarded with concrete practical inspiration to substantiate my new "positive ID."

John Lathrop pastored in the Boston area for twenty years. He embodies unity, as, throughout his life, he has been a part of a wide spectrum of expressions of the body of Christ, from liturgical and freestyle worshiping churches.

Thank you, Pastor John for inspiring hope for the vision of uniting global voices to fulfill our Lord's great pastoral prayer. I'm confident that all of your readers will join you in continuing the good work God has begun in you and in Christ's bride, the church, so together we can help our Lord make her spotless for her celestial wedding day!

Doug MacDougal is a deacon involved in prayer and community service at the Pilgrim Church in Beverly, MA, which is itself striving to break down all barriers in the body, geographic, gender, or otherwise. He thoroughly enjoys auditing classes at CUME taught by his pastors Drs. Bill and Aida Spencer.

## Review of *A Future for the Latino Church: Models for Multilingual Multigenerational Hispanic Congregations* by Daniel A. Rodriguez (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011)

JONATÁN TOLEDO

*A Future for the Latino Church* is a great reflection tool for the Hispanic church in America. Daniel Rodriguez calls us to meditate on the religious, sociohistorical, and cultural context in which many Hispanics live, directing our attention to the gap between foreign-born and United States-born Latinos. Rodriguez also seeks to help inform and equip the Hispanic evangelical church to fulfill its God-given mission but also in a way that strengthens Hispanic families and communities across the country (36). His study is aimed at drawing long-overdue attention to emerging Hispanic community leaders and churches who are committed to bridging the gap between foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinos.

Rodriguez introduces church leaders to what he calls “A Moment of Transition in the Barrio,” an age where the older barrios once dominated by foreign-born Hispanics are now being dominated by their native-born children and grandchildren (16). He calls Spanish-speaking ministries to recognize this moment of transition, highlighting the cultural divide between foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinos. The former strive to maintain their cultural and religious traditions while the latter seek to embrace different values from the dominant group in the United States. He adds that this disconnect causes the U.S.-born Latinos to be overlooked in the daily distribution of spiritual food, arguing that many conventional Spanish-speaking ministry models are unintentionally designed to preserve the language and cultural preferences of foreign-born Latinos. I believe this phenomenon also occurs among other ethnic groups living as minorities within another dominant culture, where the older generations likewise insist on maintaining their cultural and religious traditions while the younger seek to embrace new values from the diverse dominant group in which they live.

Rodriguez points out that one of the greatest challenges for Hispanic ministries today is to recognize that the church’s mission is to preach the gospel to all people and not to preserve the language and cultural preferences of any generation - whether foreign or native-born (24). He calls upon church leaders prayerfully and thoughtfully to reexamine the viability of their traditional approaches to ministry in order to reach out successfully to all Latinos alike. In addition, he provides statistical information about the population growth, language use, and educational attainments among Latinos to illustrate the present need among U.S.-born Latinos to be part of a community that understands their unique social and cultural context as Hispanic-Americans. His research is complemented by the insight he draws from the work of authors like Orlando Crespo, Virgilio Elizondo, Samuel Rodriguez, among others.

As an advocate of multicultural integration, I cannot help but applaud Rodriguez’s work in calling our attention to the moment of transition in which we now live. In my own work as a children’s pastor in Boston, I have been able to witness first-hand the urgency of many parents to expect, in subtle ways, from the church an environment where their children can be exposed to biblical teaching in Spanish, simply because they want the church to help their children preserve “their language.” Nevertheless, as Rodriguez implies throughout his work, we need our churches to incorporate programs that attract the new generation and inspire them to seek God on their own. Therefore, a bilingual model of Sunday school curriculums and children’s programs is fundamental to reach this goal within ethnic churches. By implementing a bilingual curriculum, our churches will be able to attract non Spanish-speaking children and their families, providing them a space where they too can learn about God in their own language. Notwithstanding, while the bilingual

programming might fulfill the needs for some ethnic churches as they strive to bridge the gap between generations, it is important to understand that the same model might not be necessarily effective within multicultural groups. These churches will need to default to a primary language of worship that welcomes everyone within the larger congregation.

Though a complex task, bridging the generational and cultural divide is not an impossible one. Rodriguez goes on to highlight several multigenerational Hispanic churches across the nation that have been able to find a suitable solution to meet the needs of this generation by organizing and offering services in both languages, allowing their members to invite their non-Latino friends and coworkers to the programs and ministries of the church. In my own work, I lead a diverse ministry that serves Hispanic, Haitian, Caucasian, and African children whose parents hope for them to develop a certain level of awareness about their cultural identity and backgrounds while at the same time understanding they are part of a wider multicultural group that also contributes to the shaping of their identity as Americans. Due to my fluency in both English and Spanish and as a younger member of the pastoral staff, I find myself in an excellent position to minister across generations and cultures.

Rodriguez concludes his book by re-emphasizing the importance of bridging the generational and cultural gaps among Latinos in America. Through their bicultural upbringing, native-born Latinos are uniquely qualified to bridge the linguistic, cultural, and religious divide within the Hispanic community and even between it and the non-Hispanic communities in the United States (177). Throughout his work, Rodriguez has noted that, besides planting and growing thriving Hispanic churches, U.S.-born Latinos are also reaching beyond the barrio to plant and grow multiethnic churches across the country and around the world. This is certainly something any ministry leader should consider when studying the challenge set before us in Matthew 28:19-20 to preach Christ to all people.

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## **Reseña de *Rut: Una mujer que marcó un hito en su tiempo con la bendición de Dios* por Carolyn Custis James (Miami, FL: Vida, 2009)**

OLGA SOLER

¿Es Dios bueno para con las mujeres? Así empieza el libro con una pregunta en femenino que ha desafiado argumentos teológicos y filosóficos por siglos pero Carolyn James le da una vuelta clara y firme en su obra *Rut*. Ella llama este libro un evangelio porque en su vista la historia de Rut tiene todos los elementos redentivos del evangelio de Cristo. El libro de Rut en la Biblia trata de la historia de dos mujeres que en una cultura patriarcal tuvieron que confrontarse con esta pregunta en medio de muchas experiencias similares a las de Job pero con menos recursos. Los personajes de la historia se afrentan al sufrimiento como cualquier ser humano que piensa si Dios está jugando un cruel deporte con sus vidas. El misterio nunca es resuelto completamente pero el tratamiento nos inspira. La autora desarrolla el tema con ilustraciones contemporáneas, personales y culturales que nos dan de saber que la pregunta, a pesar de ser enigmática, tiene respuesta afirmativa. Dice la autora: “Lo importante es que al encontrar a Dios en su dolor, ambos ganaron una profunda confianza en El, lo cual contribuyó a disminuir la acción de la adversidad y rechazar un posible alejamiento de Dios” (41).

La lectura de la historia bíblica de Rut es un simple narrado que no da mucho dolor emocional a la historia pero con los ojos del Espíritu una escritora como James nos puede mostrar otra dimensión de la experiencia de los personajes. Una viuda en los días bíblicos sufría su perdida a la vez que muchas veces se unida en la pobreza. Mujeres no tenían muchas opciones para trabajo honesto en ese mundo y sin un hombre para proveer se hacían rápidamente personas hambrientas e invisibles. Comprender que las viudas en países de Asia llegan al extremo de suicidarse en las llamas que queman el cuerpo de sus esposos nos muestra la desesperación de la condición de una mujer abandonada. Cuando Rut prometió cumplir con Naomi y con su Dios por el resto de su vida estaba mostrando más bravura y fe que una mujer moderna y del oeste. Ella rompió con convención y se arriesgó, alma y vida por el amor maternal de su suegra. Booz también rompió con las costumbres de esa cultura y soporto la iniciativa de Rut más le dio su bendición.

Hay muchas preguntas que la señora James confronta en esta interesante lectura. ¿Puede un hombre acercarse a la causa y los deseos de las mujeres sin perder beneficio personal? ¿Puede una mujer ser arriesgada y santa a la misma vez? ¿Qué valor tiene una mujer infértil si sola para la obra de Dios? Tiene una historia pastoral y femenina significado eterno? ¿Qué gana un hombre cuando soporta a una mujer que actúa como líder o que en ciertas situaciones coge la iniciativa? Lo increíble de la historia de Rut es que la voluntad de Dios no se hubiera cumplido si Rut no cogía la iniciativa y eso es algo asombroso para una mujer que en su mundo, como viuda sin hijos (infértil), era nada. También Booz que era rico y conocido no perdió nada pero creció personalmente cumpliendo la voluntad de Dios en la ayuda de las mujeres. Lo que Dios valía no es lo mismo que lo que el mundo valía. Además, vemos que Dios usa a las cosas que el mundo llama nada para desarrollar sus propósitos en la tierra. Igualmente de asombroso James nos enseña que Dios puede hacer –con nada- lo que nosotros necesitamos muchos recursos para hacer o hasta lo que nosotros encontramos imposible. El ambiente en tiempos bíblicos para una viuda (especialmente con el estigma de infértil) era problema suficiente para rendir la vida de Naomi y Rut corta y miserable. Pero con Dios todas las cosas son posibles. Por esto podemos ir, con confianza, a Dios y triunfar hasta en condiciones imposibles.

El libro es corto y no agota las lecciones que podemos sacar de Rut pero in forma eficaz James nos da una breve introducción a esta linda historia. Lea el libro y vea esta verdad más claramente.

Carolyn James además de ser autora es una conferenciente que promociona discusiones bíblicas sobre modos en los que hombres y mujeres pueden trabajar juntos para la causa de Cristo. Además de ser madre y esposa ella también es editora de las series Evangélico Comentario de Zondervan.

### ***English Summary***

In the book *Ruth* the author tackles the age old philosophical and theological question of pain and the goodness of God from the feminine perspective through the Book of Ruth. The treatment is personal and impressive using her own experience as well as cultural illustrations to illuminate the plight of women –especially widows- in the patriarchal times that surround the story. Questions are not all completely answered as these two feminine “Jobs” Ruth and Naomi embark on their adventure but the result is inspiring and faith provoking. The story of Ruth which in the Scriptures is a straight forward narrative can be considered quaint in its simplicity but James shows how the content of this pastoral story that features two dynamic women can indeed rival the anatomy of any heroic epic. James also asks and postulates about many other important questions to those who value equality. Can men support women’s plight and initiative without detracting from their own personal benefits? Can women be saints and risk takers all at once? Are we just here for marriage and babies or can God use us without them? What is the actual value of a woman who is single and infertile? What benefits do men gain in being supportive to women who initiate? Carolyn James uses Ruth, Naomi and Boaz who all broke the cultural mores of their time to answer these and to show that what God’s ways are not our ways. Read the book and see these great truths more clearly.

Olga Soler estudio en el seminario Gordon-Conwell (CUME) en Boston y ahora usa todos modos de arte y creatividad en modos espirituales y como terapia. Ella asistió a la escuela de Performing Arts y atendió el instituto teatral de Lee Strasberg y los estudios de Herbert Burghof en Nueva York donde ella participo en el teatro profesional. Ella ha obrado y escrito para el teatro y el escenario profesional y ha escrito varios libros inspiraciones, además de obras teatrales para la escena teatral y películas. Ella ha trabajado con temas de adicción y abuso en su comunidad y como presentadora en conferencias, colegios, librerías, iglesias, cárceles, casas de auxilio, y la calle en los Estados Unidos y en Inglaterra.